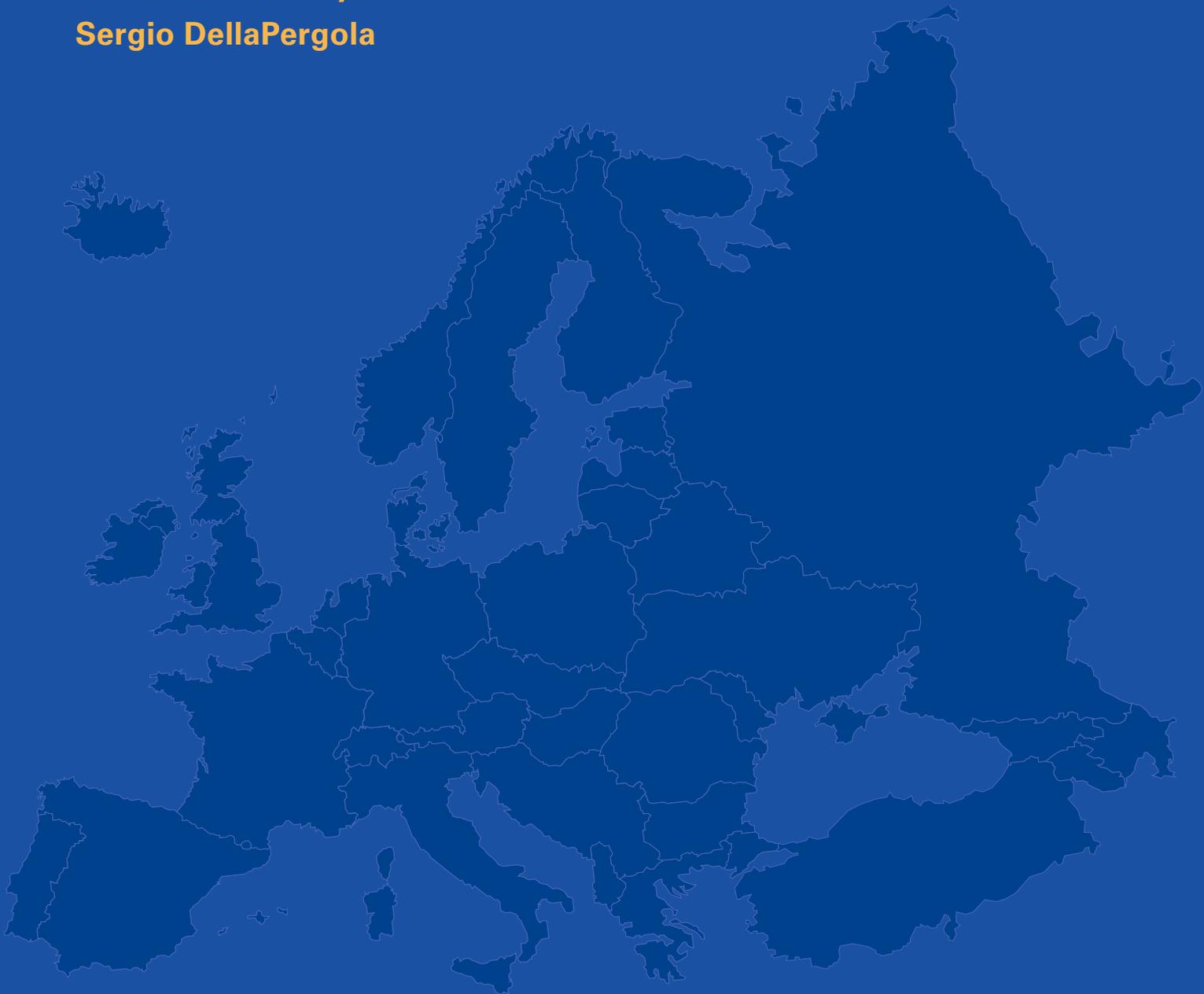


# Why European Jewish demography?

A foundation paper

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The **Institute for Jewish Policy Research** is a London-based research organisation, consultancy and think-tank. It aims to advance the prospects of Jewish communities in the United Kingdom and across Europe by conducting research and informing policy development in dialogue with those best placed to positively influence Jewish life. Its European Jewish Demography Unit exists to generate demographic data and analysis to support Jewish community planning and development throughout the continent.

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## **/ Introduction**

In the course of 2018, the Institute for Jewish Policy Research (JPR) teamed up with the Rothschild Foundation Hanadiv Europe to establish a new initiative at JPR: the European Jewish Demography Unit. The Unit aims to undertake demographic research about Jewish populations across Europe, in order to provide empirical assessments of population trends and developments, and to support Jewish community development in countries throughout the continent. This paper is the first output of the Unit, and outlines in detail its scientific agenda, methodology and policy mission.

It is written in three parts. Part 1 describes what Jewish demography is, as a subject area, and its purpose and value, with specific reference to Jews in Europe. Part 2 explores some of the critiques of demography from the past and present, and responds to these by outlining how the data should be used and have been used for highly constructive purposes. Part 3 outlines what the European Jewish Demography Unit will do, and the methods and approach it will take.

# 1 / Jewish demography as a study of Jewish continuity

## How many Jews in Europe?

How many Jews exist in the world? Or in Europe? Or in any particular country of Europe? Demography provides accepted answers to all of these questions. The number of people who would describe themselves as Jews today, when asked in a census or a social survey, was estimated at 14,606,000 globally at the beginning of 2018. The two major population centres of world Jewry, Israel and the United States of America, host between them 84% of the total Jewish population. Europe as a whole, including Eastern Europe, hosts 1.35 million, or 9.2% of all Jews, i.e. a majority of the Jews living outside of Israel and the USA. The European Union with its 28 current member states (including the UK) hosts about 1.1 million Jews, and these constitute 7.4% of all Jews in the world.<sup>1</sup> Thus, in the grand scheme of things, Europe is not a Jewish population giant equivalent to Israel and the USA in Jewish terms, but it is still the third most important geographical and socio-political centre of world Jewry, or a 'third pillar' of the Jewish world, as some observers have maintained.<sup>2</sup> Thus, the importance of Europe in the framework of Jewish demography is self-evident, but there is much more to the story of its importance in Jewish history and, by extension, Jewish social statistics.

From the beginning of the second millennium of the Common Era, Europe began to evolve as one of the largest, and certainly one of the most influential centres of Jewish civilisation. Its share in the world Jewish population increased from 13% (150,000), as estimated around the time of the Crusades (twelfth century), to 45% (600,000) around the time of Christopher Columbus' voyages (fifteenth century), and to almost 90% (6,800,000) in the second half of the nineteenth century.<sup>3</sup> The two principal Jewish cultural subgroups – the Ashkenazim and the Sephardim – matured on European soil. However, the share of European Jews in the world Jewish population declined abruptly between the late nineteenth century and the present, first as a result of the mass migration of Jews particularly to the United States, Canada and Latin America, then as a result of the genocide carried out by Nazi Germany and its collaborators in Nazi-controlled territories, and later due to a major wave of migration to Israel from the Former Soviet Union at the end of the twentieth century following the collapse of communism. Today, the proportionate share of European Jews in the world Jewish population has returned to the levels last seen almost 900 years ago, around the times of Rashi and the First Crusade, begging the question: where will European Jewry go from here?

1 Source: DellaPergola, S. 2019. *World Jewish Population, 2018*. Current Jewish Population Reports. Berman Jewish Databank, in cooperation with the Association for the Social Scientific Study of Jewry.

2 This conceptualisation is present in the works of D. Pinto (*A new Jewish identity for post-1989 Europe*, 1996, London: Institute for Jewish Policy Research) and E. Ben-Rafael, O. Gloeckner and Y. Sternberg (*Jews and Jewish education in Germany today*, 2011, Leiden: Brill).

3 DellaPergola, S. 2001. *Some fundamentals of Jewish demographic history*. Papers in Jewish Demography 1997 (Jewish Population Studies 29). Jerusalem: The Avraham Harman Institute of Contemporary Jewry, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

Addressing this question in demographic terms and doing so convincingly is the scientific goal of the new European Jewish Demography Unit, established by the Institute for Jewish Policy Research in January 2019. The more pragmatically defined objective of the Unit is to create demographic profiles of European Jewish populations at a country level, documenting their size, structure, composition, patterns of Jewish identity, factors of growth and decline, and past and projected trajectories over time. At all times, the Unit will undertake this work with an emphasis on: (a) policy relevance, especially from the point of view of European Jewish communities; and (b) providing interpretative commentary about the figures to enable users to develop an understanding of, and appreciation for, the importance of Jewish demography. The ultimate question of the future of European Jewry can only be answered through comprehensive documentation of the demographic realities of its constituent communities, and by weaving that evidence into a comprehensive and meaningful picture of Jews across Europe. The immediate beneficiaries of this work will be community leaders and professionals, policy makers and academics, who will gradually gain greater clarity about the demography of various European Jewish communities, and Jewish Europe as a whole. The methods and materials of the new Unit will be presented in greater detail in the following sections. However, before this is done, it is worth giving some further consideration to the issue of Jewish continuity, in general and in Europe, and to the role that the science of demography plays in telling that story.

### What is Europe?

At a time of great uncertainty for the future membership and political direction of the European Union, it may appear paradoxical that a research unit devoted to the study of European Jews has been established and located in the United Kingdom. This might be interpreted as

an act of faith and optimism in human common sense, in the hope that the higher interests of continental peace, economic development, cultural exchange and civil rights and liberties will continue to prevail for all citizens in spite of possible changes in Europe's political boundaries and administrative arrangements. What is certain, though, is that whatever course Europe will choose to take, the fate and quality of life of its Jewish citizens and community will be affected. Jewish life is deeply related to local place: country, city and neighbourhood. But it also strongly reflects broader historical and contemporary transnational trends that have accompanied the movement of Jews across territorial boundaries in the long term and have affected their individual and collective culture and solidarity. A European framework has been, and will remain, highly relevant to understanding the past changes, present reality, and possible future directions of Jews right across the continent.

### Jewish existential anxieties

'Where from here?' or 'What will become of us?' is a recurring theme that Jewish historians, philosophers and intellectuals tackle, often addressed with a note of significant concern. As Simon Rawidowicz wrote in his oft-cited *Israel, the ever-dying people*: "He who studies the history of the Jews will readily discover that there was hardly a generation in the Diaspora period which did not consider itself the final link in Israel's chain... Each generation grieved not only for itself but also for the great past that was going to disappear forever, as well as for the future of unborn generations who would never see the light of day."<sup>4</sup> In his paper, Rawidowicz provides examples of such attitudes through generations of Jewish scholars and writers, from rabbinic sages in the first two hundred years of the Common Era to modern Hebrew poets. His examples are eclectic, and his tone slightly tongue in cheek, yet his characterisation of the concern about continuity as a dominant theme of Jewish

4 Rawidowicz, S. 1986. *Israel, the ever-dying people, and other essays*. Associated University Presses, p.53.

life rings true. Moreover, it is certainly true that matters relating to the assimilation of Jews into wider society and hostility towards Jews were strong motivational factors behind the work of the earliest Jewish demographers, most notably Arthur Ruppin, whose period of activity spanned the time of the rapid modernisation of world Jewry in the early twentieth century to the rise of Nazism. Today, a century after Ruppin, Jewish communal discourse remains strongly focused on matters of continuity, and antisemitism and intermarriage are two leading topics in this respect. There are important demographic aspects to these, as well as to many other topics which are of crucial importance for understanding Jewish continuity.

### Antisemitism – and Who is a Jew?

That antisemitism comes first on this list of topics is understandable. Over the centuries antisemitism has proved to be a lethal force. Just before the Holocaust, in 1939, following several decades of vigorous growth, the global Jewish population reached its historical peak of 16.6 million. Less than a decade later, in 1948, it was 11.5 million, i.e. about 30% smaller in size.<sup>5</sup> The Holocaust-related population losses quantified in this way are the net outcome of all population flows during 1939–1948, notably those murdered for being Jews as part of the Nazi extermination programme (captured by the mortality component), and those who died of natural causes (also captured by the mortality component), as well as children born in that period (captured by the fertility component, in itself significantly depressed due to low fertility owing to war and also due to the physical destruction of women of childbearing age).

Today, the global Jewish population is still estimated to be below the mark reached in 1939.

There is a degree of controversy attached to the last statement, and it is interesting to fully comprehend the meaning of this controversy in order to appreciate the dimensions of the Holocaust as a population catastrophe. The controversy played out in the popular press during the course of 2015, both in Israel and in the Jewish Diaspora, on the back of certain journalistic reports about the publication of world Jewish population estimates. In itself, an update of the global Jewish population estimates is an important but not unusual occurrence. After all, such estimates have been routinely produced by the Institute of Contemporary Jewry at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and are made available to all through the flagship publication of the Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics, its annual *Statistical Abstract of Israel*, among other means. Thus, the differential visibility of this or that release to the public cannot be fully explained by the release's content alone; the logic of the news industry plays a major role in increasing, or suppressing, the public appetite for certain types of news. On this particular occasion, the attention of the media and the public focused on the existence of alternative estimates of the global Jewish population size. As stated above, the more reliable estimates of the global Jewish population put it at slightly above the 14.5 million mark, considerably lower than the pre-Holocaust peak of 16.6 million. Yet, including in the count those who have a Jewish parent but may or may not self-identify as Jews would take the estimate to 17.8 million, which is higher than the pre-Holocaust peak.<sup>6</sup>

5 Central Bureau of Statistics, Israel. 2018. Annual data 2018. Table 2.11 (Jewish population in the world and in Israel). [www.cbs.gov.il/reader/shnaton/shnatone\\_new.htm?CYear=2017&Vol=68&CSubject=2](http://www.cbs.gov.il/reader/shnaton/shnatone_new.htm?CYear=2017&Vol=68&CSubject=2).

6 Numbers sourced from: DellaPergola, S. 2019. *World Jewish Population, 2018*. Current Jewish Population Reports. Berman Jewish Databank, in cooperation with Association for the Social Scientific Study of Jewry. Readers with an interest in the debate can follow it through (1) JTA. Worldwide Jewish population nears pre-Holocaust numbers, *The Times of Israel*, 26 June 2015, [www.timesofisrael.com/worldwide-jewish-population-nears-pre-holocaust-numbers/](http://www.timesofisrael.com/worldwide-jewish-population-nears-pre-holocaust-numbers/). (2) Borschel-Dan. A. Worldwide Jewry nowhere near pre-WWII numbers, says foremost Jewish demographer, *The Times of Israel*, 28 June 2015, [www.timesofisrael.com/worldwide-jewry-nowhere-near-pre-wwii-numbers-says-foremost-jewish-demographer/](http://www.timesofisrael.com/worldwide-jewry-nowhere-near-pre-wwii-numbers-says-foremost-jewish-demographer/). (3) Taylor, A. Has the global Jewish population finally rebounded from the Holocaust?, *The Washington Post*, 2 July 2015, [www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2015/07/02/has-the-global-jewish-population-finally-rebounded-from-the-holocaust-not-exactly/?utm\\_term=.5152af0bec76](http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2015/07/02/has-the-global-jewish-population-finally-rebounded-from-the-holocaust-not-exactly/?utm_term=.5152af0bec76).

At the heart of this 'Jewish population controversy', is the changing reality of Jewish life reflected in the changing reality of counting Jews. Counting Jews today is arguably less straightforward than it was in 1939, given that the processes of assimilation are far more advanced today, resulting in a large margin of people – indeed, above 3 million globally – who are thought of as Jews by some and as non-Jews by others. Considering the basic requirement of maximal comparability of estimates, sticking to the core 14.6 million estimate makes more sense than adopting the expanded 17.8 million estimate. This, however, should not be taken as an indication that these 'ambiguous' 3 million people should be discarded, if there is a desire to develop informed policy towards this population. Knowing its characteristics and size, in a reality driven by policy concerns, is more important than 'labelling' it correctly. This can be easily accepted by all sides of this debate. The real reason that the 3 million gap between the estimates became a focus of much discussion in the media relates to the fact that, when comprehended next to the Holocaust, the 'stakes' of including or excluding certain people suddenly appear higher.

That is the real centrepiece of the story, which, in this case, is only masked by the excessive attention given to demographic details: the very fact that today, nearly eighty years after the Holocaust, experts in Jewish demography and Jewish communities across the world may debate whether or not the Holocaust population losses have been recouped (globally, certainly not locally). Compare the Jewish population story to that of the other chief 'protagonists' of the Second World War. The Soviet Union and Germany, for example, both sustained considerable population losses. Soviet population records indicate that restoring the total Soviet

population size to its pre-war levels took about ten years. German population records show that, upon the cessation of hostilities, the population of West Germany was more numerous than before the outbreak of war, i.e. the forces of population growth – including population transfers – managed to compensate for the losses in the interim.<sup>7</sup> As for the Jews in Europe, the answer to the question of when the Jewish population will recover its former size is never, or at least not for any kind of foreseeable future. There is little wonder then that in today's Europe and elsewhere in the Diaspora, Jews continue to show anxiety about the threat of antisemitism as they watch political developments around them.<sup>8</sup> The population losses during the Holocaust are key to understanding the Jewish mind today.



**Today, nearly eighty years after the Holocaust, experts in Jewish demography and Jewish communities across the world may debate whether or not the Holocaust population losses have been recouped globally**

This, however, is not the sole reason to discuss the Holocaust in the opening chapter of this paper on European Jewish demography. Numbers matter: a large population means political influence, cultural impact, and electoral power. It also means a vigorous communal life: large religious congregations, social clubs, nurseries, schools, consumer groups, significant probabilities of having Jewish friends and colleagues, and of encountering a Jewish candidate for marriage. One can simulate the 'would be' Jewish population numbers if the Holocaust had not occurred. Indeed, such

7 For the Soviet population estimates see: Андреев, Е., Дарский, Л., Харьковская, Т. 1993. Население Советского Союза, 1922–1991. Москва: Наука, стр. 118–119 (Andreev, E., Darskii, L., Kharkova, T. 1993. Naselenye Sovietskogo Soyuza, 1922–1991. Moscow: Nauka, pp. 118–119). The conclusions regarding Germany are based on the data communicated directly by the Federal Statistical Office of Germany; the data relate to the areas of West Germany identically defined in 1939 and 1946, for comparability.

8 This mood and its impact on the research agenda is presented in: Boyd, J. and Staetsky, L. Daniel. *Could it happen here? What existing data tell us about contemporary antisemitism in the UK*. London: Institute for Jewish Policy Research, May 2015.

simulations exist and they put the imagined global Jewish population in the range of 25–35 million.<sup>9</sup> Given the pre-Holocaust distribution of Jews across the world, it is likely that Europe would have had about half of this number, i.e. about 15 million. It is much more difficult to imagine what Jewish communal life might look like. That it would be more vibrant than it is today, there is little reason to doubt. The impact of the Holocaust in Europe differed by community: some Jewish communities, such as Britain, were largely unaffected and in the aftermath emerged more numerous than during pre-Holocaust times; others, such as Germany, got close to being eliminated and were eventually replenished by intra-European Jewish migration. Many Central and Eastern European Jewish communities, on the other hand, experienced depopulation comparable only to the effects of the Great Plague in Europe in the fourteenth and the fifteenth centuries. The question, and the challenge, for many Jewish communities of Europe today is how to maintain a meaningful Jewish life in view of the ‘Jewish depopulation’ which began with the Holocaust but, as will be shown shortly, was continued by other forces, some purely demographic, others cultural, and which already had a perceptible impact on Jews before the Holocaust struck: cultural assimilation, low fertility and migration.

### Intermarriage

Intermarriage, i.e. marriage of Jews to non-Jews, has been understood by many analysts and much of the Jewish public to be a key component in the demographic decline of Jews as an ethnic and religious group; on average,

children of intermarried individuals self-define and behave in ways that are ‘less Jewish,’ be it in terms of ritual observance, ties with other Jews or the readiness to see themselves in exclusively Jewish terms, when compared with children of inmarried individuals. Intermarried individuals themselves tend to be ‘less Jewish’ in relation to many attitudes, practices and identity compared to inmarried individuals. In the early twentieth century, intermarriage could be considered a rare phenomenon in the Jewish communities of Eastern Europe, the Middle East and North Africa, and in North America, where fewer than 5% of Jews married non-Jews. In most countries of Western Europe and the USSR the corresponding figure was in the range of 5%–25% and nowhere was it much higher than 33%. Subsequently, the incidence of intermarriage increased dramatically, and around the turn of the twenty-first century nearly everywhere outside Israel – with the notable exceptions of Latin America, South Africa and certain Jewish communities in the Middle East – it was in excess of 25%; in certain places, most notably the countries of the former USSR, Germany and Austria, a majority of Jews married non-Jews by around the year 2000.<sup>10</sup> There are many illustrations of the ‘status’ of intermarriage as a factor in the numerical erosion of Jews, and the same fundamentals in the process of assimilation that are correlated with intermarriage can be observed in very different Jewish communities today, including the United States of America, Australia and Europe, as well as the Former Soviet Union and historical Jewish populations.<sup>11</sup>

9 DellaPergola, S. 1996. Between science and fiction: notes on the demography of the Holocaust, *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 10 (1): 34–52.

10 A comprehensive overview of levels and trends in intermarriage can be found in: DellaPergola, S. 2009. Jewish out-marriage: a global perspective, in Reinharz, S. and DellaPergola, S. (eds.) *Jewish Intermarriage around the world*. New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers.

11 The academic literature on this subject is very considerable in volume. Some illustrations of the arguments made here can be found in the following publications, and references therein: (1) Ruppin, A. 1934. *The Jews in the modern world*. London: Macmillan. (2) Barron, M. 1946. The incidence of Jewish intermarriage in Europe and America, *American Sociological Review* 11,1. (3) Cohen, S.M. 2006. A tale of two Jewries: the “inconvenient truth” for American Jews’. Jewish Life Network/Steinhardt Foundation. November 2006, [www.steinhardtfoundation.org/wp-install/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/steven\\_cohen\\_paper.pdf](http://www.steinhardtfoundation.org/wp-install/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/steven_cohen_paper.pdf). (4) Graham, D. 2016. *Jews in couples: marriage, intermarriage, cohabitation and divorce in Britain*. JPR Report, [www.jpr.org.uk/documents/JPR\\_2016.Jews\\_in\\_couples.Marriage\\_intermarriage\\_cohabitation\\_and\\_divroce\\_in\\_Britain.July\\_2016.pdf](http://www.jpr.org.uk/documents/JPR_2016.Jews_in_couples.Marriage_intermarriage_cohabitation_and_divroce_in_Britain.July_2016.pdf). (5) Several essays included in the edited volume by Reinharz, S. and DellaPergola, S. (eds.) *Jewish Intermarriage around the world*. New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers, and in particular essays by Sergio DellaPergola, Lars Dencik, Mark Tolts and Gary Eckstein.

There are also several questions about intermarriage that remain open at present. In particular, although the Jewish communal conversation tends to relate to intermarriage as a cause of assimilation, especially in relation to children, this may be just part of the story. Indeed, it may not be the main story at all. Intermarriage may well be a *path* of assimilation, rather than its cause. After all, intermarried Jews themselves display lower levels of attachment to 'all things Jewish', on average.<sup>12</sup> There should be little surprise then that their children should be less inclined to remain Jewish – not necessarily because the environment of a mixed family as such made them behave in this way, but because the reality of a mixed family in and of itself reflects a certain set of a Jewish parent's priorities. Jewish parents creating a mixed family may perceive, on average, the transmission of strong and exclusive Jewishness to their children as secondary to other life goals. To the best of these authors' knowledge, the precise role of intermarriage in the picture of assimilation – is it a cause or a vessel? – has not been clarified, and it could be very useful to do so for the development of a more informed Jewish communal response to this phenomenon. However, lack of certainty in this respect is inconsequential from the point of view of the correlation that exists between intermarriage and the process of erosion of Jewish identity, i.e. assimilation.



**What should be kept in mind in any case is that the choice of spouse or permanent life partner, whether Jewish or non-Jewish, appears to be the prime marker of the higher or lower degree of Jewishness later in life concerning a full range of personal, family and community behaviours and choices**

Furthermore, there are also voices calling for a more nuanced analysis of the patterns of Jewish identity transmission, maintaining that such an analysis has the potential to paint the role of intermarriage in more positive colours. One such example is the work of Theodore Sasson, whose analysis of the results of the Pew Research Center's 2013 survey of American Jews suggests that the tendency of the children of intermarried couples in the USA to self-identify as Jews may have increased over the last two generations, and, further, that the majority of children born to intermarried couples today self-identify as Jews in some form. Specifically, whereas 25% of adult American Jews aged 65 years and over with intermarried parents identify as Jewish or partly Jewish, 59% of adults aged 18–29 years with intermarried parents do so.<sup>13</sup> These are valid observations, but they cannot undermine what Sasson refers to, with a spoonful of irony, as 'the inexorable laws of demography,' namely, that 59% is still very far from 100% and that a very significant proportion of this group, close to one half, self-identifies as 'Jewish of no religion' or 'partly Jewish,' i.e. they give a somewhat more limited, ambiguous description of their Jewishness. Given the numerical facts cited above, the status of intermarriage as a marker/cause/consequence of assimilation at a population level is reasserted. In today's Jewish Diaspora – and it could have been different in the distant past – intermarriage is an aspect of assimilation; in the context of intermarriage, the Jewish population sheds members as a result of less than full self-identification of the children of intermarried people as Jews. Some degree of shedding takes place in inmarried couples too, but the scope of this is far lower than in intermarried couples.

These analyses are valuable in that, first, they sharpen the understanding that the inclination of the children of intermarried couples to self-identify as Jews may vary in time and context, and therefore close monitoring of the developments

12 See essays by Erik Cohen, Lars Dencik and Sally Frankental and Stuart Rothgiesser in the edited volume by Reinharz, S. and DellaPergola, S. (eds.) *Jewish Intermarriage around the world*. New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers.

13 Sasson, T. 2013. New analysis of Pew Data: children of intermarriage increasingly identify as Jews, *Tablet Magazine*, [www.tabletmag.com/jewish-news-and-politics/151506/young-jews-opt-in](http://www.tabletmag.com/jewish-news-and-politics/151506/young-jews-opt-in).

in this respect is warranted. Jewishness can be more or less neutral, and more or less desirable. What should be kept in mind in any case is that the choice of spouse or permanent life partner, whether Jewish or non-Jewish, appears to be the prime marker of the higher or lower degree of Jewishness later in life concerning a full range of personal, family and community behaviours and choices. The Jewishness of the parents also powerfully affects the family choices of children when they reach adulthood, thus creating a long range chain of predictable causation.<sup>14</sup> An interesting possibility arises when attention is paid not just to the different levels of transmission of Jewishness by inmarried and intermarried couples, but also to the relative weight of such couples in the population. Theoretically, when intermarriage becomes very widespread, the children of intermarried couples still identifying as Jews may outnumber the children of inmarried couples in communal settings and in the Jewish population as a whole. Undoubtedly, this is an important point to notice for communal leaders; however it does not make intermarriage a sustainable engine of population growth. For intermarriage to be decoupled from assimilation, the levels of Jewish identity transmission of the children of the intermarried and inmarried parents should become equal – something that appears to be far from reality,<sup>15</sup> with the possible exceptions of some small Jewish communities.

### Births and deaths

The physical source of sustainable population growth, or stability, is a positive balance of births and deaths, i.e. a situation where the number of Jewish births is greater than the number of Jewish deaths after the effects of assimilation and migration have been taken into account. In this respect, Jews are no different from any other population. Fertility is the main supplier of new members to any population and the level of 2.1 children born to a woman in her lifetime

is held as an approximate marker of sufficiently high fertility for sustaining the current population size. Fertility above this level would almost inevitably produce some population growth, 'almost' – because a very high death rate, migration or, as is the case with many Jewish populations, assimilation, may require a higher level of fertility for the population to grow or remain stable. Natural balance, and fertility in particular, is a less popular subject in the Jewish continuity-centred communal conversation when compared to antisemitism and intermarriage. Yet they are at least equally important topics: assimilation, through intermarriage or independently of it, can have very considerable dimensions, but when there is a significant surplus of Jewish births over Jewish deaths, Jewish populations may still experience growth or, at the very least, stability.



### Today, low fertility and low natural growth are nearly universal in the Jewish Diaspora, and in Europe in particular

Today, low fertility and low natural growth are nearly universal in the Jewish Diaspora, and in Europe in particular. Many populations of the West, besides Jews, have a low natural balance and owe a significant part of their growth to migration. This situation, among Jews and others, developed as a result of the process called a 'demographic transition,' i.e. a world-wide transition from a combination of high fertility and high mortality to a combination of low fertility and low mortality. The demographic transition can be thought of as part of the process of modernisation: in the Western world, the demographic transition began roughly in the mid-nineteenth century with an increase in life expectancy from the pre-transitional levels of just 30 years to about 50 years at the

14 DellaPergola, S. 2011. *Jewish Demographic Policies: Population Trends and Options in Israel and in the Diaspora*. Jerusalem: Jewish People Policy Institute.

15 Phillips, B.A. 2018. Intermarriage in the Twenty-First Century: New Perspectives. *American Jewish Year Book 2017*, ed. A. Dashefsky and I. Sheskin. 31–119. Dordrecht: Springer.

beginning of the twentieth century and to about 80 years at the beginning of the twenty-first.<sup>16</sup> The early reduction in the force of mortality resulted from the improvement in public health measures, including sanitation and quarantine procedures in the cases of epidemics. Such developments led primarily to a reduction in mortality from communicable (e.g. infectious) diseases. At a later stage, scientific breakthroughs in clinical medicine started playing an important role and produced a further reduction in non-communicable diseases (e.g. heart disease, cancer etc.). Albeit with some delay, fertility responded to the increase in longevity. Low longevity before the demographic transition meant that fertility had to be high in order to guarantee the survival of a desirable number of children. With the arrival of high longevity and economic changes, the level of fertility declined from the pre-transitional range of five to eight children per woman on average,<sup>17</sup> to around or below two children per woman.

Jews were forerunners of the demographic transition: the earliest available datasets demonstrate that Jewish longevity probably increased earlier than the longevity of non-Jews and that Jews started to control their fertility earlier too.<sup>18</sup> Indeed, this legacy of the demographic transition, in combination with the forces of assimilation, accounts for the modern Jewish demographic drama in the Diaspora. Between the mid-nineteenth and the mid-twentieth centuries, both in Europe and the Americas, Jewish fertility was lower, in relative terms, than the fertility of the surrounding non-Jewish populations. The advanced outcome of the fertility drop is an increase in the proportion of the elderly and a simultaneous decrease in the proportion of children and people of childbearing age.

This process is known as ageing, and today, most European Jewish populations are more aged than the surrounding non-Jewish populations.

Ageing creates a low reproduction trap which may be temporary but it is no less worrying for contemporaries. Low fertility may not be disastrously low, but when it is superimposed on a population with a small number of women of reproductive age, the resultant number of births is too low for the population size to remain stable. One can reasonably ask here about the parallel effects of longevity. After all, if longevity is higher than it used to be, more people should remain alive, fewer deaths should occur and that should, in theory, counteract the effect of low fertility. Indeed, high longevity helps to preserve numbers at this advanced stage of the demographic transition. However, the problem is that when the population is so aged, the number of deaths will be high even when health is good and the probability of death, compared to the past, is low. In such a population, the number of women of childbearing age is not sufficiently numerous to provide 'enough' births – even though the number of children per woman may be reasonably high – but the number of elderly people is high enough to produce many deaths, even though the probability of death per person is low. And that means that an aged population is likely to end up with a smaller number of births than deaths.

The distinction between Israel and the Jewish Diaspora is very important here: the demographic transition in Israel led to very high longevity – in fact, among the highest in the world – but what has been truly unique is the persistence of a relatively high fertility of about three children per woman. The Jewish Diaspora, on the other hand, in Europe and elsewhere, struggles to reproduce itself.

16 Livi-Bacci, M. 1992. *A concise history of world population*. Cambridge and Oxford: Blackwell, esp. p. 109.

17 Ibid, Livi-Bacci 1992, p. 14.

18 Bachi, R. 1976. *Population Trends of World Jewry*. Jerusalem: The Hebrew University, Jewish Population Studies n. 9; DellaPergola, S. 1989. Changing Patterns of Jewish Demography in the Modern World. In *The Netherlands and Jewish Migration; The Problem of Migration and Jewish Identity*. *Studia Rosenthaliana*, 23, 2, 154–174.

## Migration

Migration has brought Jews, an Eastern Mediterranean nation, to Europe, and taken them from there. It is estimated that between 1870 and 1924 about 2.5 million Jews left Europe in the direction of the USA, Canada, Argentina and South Africa. They left on the back of the great migration tide from Europe that was driven by over-population on the continent and which also included Italians, Poles, Germans and English, although Jewish migration was more permanent in nature, i.e. the number of returnees was relatively low. In contrast to other groups, Jews were most decisively leaving Europe for good.<sup>19</sup> About 100,000 went to what would become Israel. After the end of the Second World War, Jewish migration from Europe resumed. Most notably, almost 2.3 million Jews left Europe for Israel in the period between the end of the war and 2017.<sup>20</sup> To this number should be added about 404,000 Jews who left the (post) Soviet territories and relocated to the United States.<sup>21</sup>

There is no ambition, in this paper, to create a comprehensive statistical account of all Jewish migration streams out of Europe. It is clear, however, given the dimensions of the two major post-war streams mentioned, to Israel and the USA, that out-migration was a critical factor in bringing Jewish Europe to its current dimensions: the post-war Jewish population in Europe amounted to 3.8 million; over 2.7 million left, and today's population of 1.4 million is the net effect of that tremendous departure, alongside Jewish

births and Jewish in-migration into Europe. In-migration of Jews into Europe occurred as well. The mass migration of Jews from North Africa around the mid-twentieth century is one such example: it contributed to the growth of certain European Jewish populations, most importantly France, whose Jewish population increased from 180,000 to 350,000 between 1945 and 1960.<sup>22</sup> Jewish migration from North Africa was also perceptible in Italy and Spain. In fact, the Spanish Jewish population was one of three European Jewish populations that grew considerably between the 1960s and 2017, even more so than the French Jewish population, in proportionate terms. In general, it is noteworthy that the only European Jewish communities that grew (France, Germany and Spain) did so largely because of migration.<sup>23</sup> In the case of Germany, however, it was the arrival of (post) Soviet Jews that caused the growth; in continental terms that movement expressed a redistribution within the continent, not migration into Europe. Overall, during the post-war years, Jewish in-migration to Europe was very modest compared to out-migration.

## Where next?

What are the demographic prospects of the European Jewish population? In our view, the natural balance of births and deaths may become more conducive to growth. Today, in the short-term historical perspective, we are living through an era experiencing the severe consequences

19 This estimate derives from Hersch, L. 1931. International migration of the Jews, *International Migrations*, V.II. National Bureau of Economic Research, 471–520.

20 This number includes about 234,000 Jews who came to the area that became Israel during the 1930s and the early 1940s. The number also includes members of non-Jewish members of Jewish families. Central Bureau of Statistics, Israel. 2018. Annual data 2018. Table 4.2 (Immigrants by period of immigration and last continent of residence).

21 Sources: (1) Heitman, S. 1993. The third Soviet emigration, 1948–1991, *Refuge, Canada's Journal on Refugees* 13 (2): 5–13, <https://refuge.journals.yorku.ca/index.php/refuge/article/view/21717/20387>. (2) Tolts, M. 2001. The post-Soviet Jewish emigration. Paper presented at the European Population Conference 2001, Helsinki, Finland, 7–9 June.

22 Sources: (1) Staetsky, L. Daniel. 2017. *Are Jews leaving Europe?*, JPR Report, [www.jpr.org.uk/documents/JPR.2017.Are\\_Jews\\_leaving\\_Europe.pdf](http://www.jpr.org.uk/documents/JPR.2017.Are_Jews_leaving_Europe.pdf). (2) DellaPergola S. 1993. Jews in the European Community: sociodemographic trends and challenges. *American Jewish Year Book*, v. 93.

23 These calculations are based on comparing the estimates from the two following sources: (1) DellaPergola S. 2018. World Jewish Population, 2017. In: Dashefsky A., Sheskin I. (eds) *American Jewish Year Book 2017*. *American Jewish Year Book*, v. 117. Cham: Springer; (2) DellaPergola S. 1993. Jews in the European Community: sociodemographic trends and challenges. *American Jewish Year Book*, v. 93. New York: The American Jewish Committee; Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 25–82. (3) DellaPergola, S. 2011. Jews in Europe: Demographic Trends, Contexts, Outlooks. In J. Schoeps, O. Glöckner with A. Kreienbrink (eds.) *A Road to Nowhere? Jewish Experiences in Unifying Europe*. Leiden/Boston: Brill, 3–34.

of the demographic transition. That era, however, is bound to end at some point. The Jewish population is aged now, but that legacy of the demographic transition will be spent when the most aged cohorts die off. When this happens, the 'new elderly people' will be less numerous in absolute terms, and less weighty in relative terms, because they themselves would have been born at a time of low fertility. Eventually, a population's composition in terms of age and even size can be reasonably expected to stabilise. Low and unchanging fertility, say about 2.1 children per woman, and low and unchanging mortality can generate such an outcome. Indeed, some leading demographers expect the demographic transition on the global scale to end in this manner precisely. Not all populations will reach this point simultaneously, but, given the fact that Jews were forerunners of the demographic transition, it is quite possible that they will get there first.



### A considerable surplus of births over deaths may be required for the numerical stability of the Jewish population to persist

However, the balance of births and deaths is not the end of the story in the case of the Jews. Should Jewish reproduction levels stabilise in the future, the force of assimilation is still likely to continue to trim the population. As a result, a considerable surplus of births over deaths may be required for the numerical stability of the Jewish

population to persist. Migration may or may not help. Will the European Jewish population continue to shrink, and, if so, at what pace?

Our ability to answer this question depends on obtaining clarity on the following matters:

- **The most recent developments in the reproductive capacity of European Jewish populations.** Between the mid-twentieth century and the present, some Jewish Diaspora communities with good quality data (Germany, the United States of America and the Soviet Union), show that fertility appeared to be at a level below that required for population reproduction, which is 2.1 children per woman.<sup>24</sup> In other places, such as France and the United Kingdom, the most recent measurements indicate the presence of fertility at or above this level – a situation conducive to population growth.<sup>25</sup> It is also worth noting that a comprehensive map of the most recent levels of Jewish fertility in Europe does not currently exist. Given the centrality of fertility for population growth and the uncertainty concerning the most recent levels of European Jewish fertility, this topic should constitute a priority for anyone seeking to understand the demographic prospects of European Jewry.
- **The most recent effects of intermarriage and assimilation on European Jews, given that these are forces that considerably trim Jewish fertility.** In essence, can Jewish fertility win in the 'struggle' against assimilation in the net effect on the number of Jews in Europe?

24 Sources: (1) Ritterband, P. 1992. The fertility of the Jewish people: A contemporary overview. In *World Jewish Population: Trends and Policies*, ed. S. DellaPergola, and L. Cohen, 93–105. Jerusalem: Association for Demographic Policy of the Jewish People; (2) DellaPergola, S. 1980. Patterns of American Jewish fertility, *Demography* 17 (3), 261–273; (3) Tolts, M. 1997. Demographic trends among Jews in three Slavic republics of the former USSR: a comparative analysis, in S. DellaPergola and J. Even (eds.), *Papers in Jewish Demography 1993*. Jerusalem: The Hebrew University, Jewish Population Studies 27; (4) Cohen, S., Ukeles, J., and Miller, R. 2012. Jewish Community Study of New York: 2011. Comprehensive Report. New York: UJA-Federation of New York, <http://d4ovtrzyow8g.cloudfront.net/494344.pdf>.

25 Sources: (1) Bensimon, D. and DellaPergola, S. 1986. *La population juive de France: Socio-démographie et identité* (Jewish Population Studies no. 17). Jerusalem: The Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Paris: The Institute of Contemporary Jewry, Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique; (2) Cohen, E.H. 2009. *The Jews of France at the turn of the third millennium: a sociological and cultural analysis*. The Rappaport Center for Assimilation Research and Strengthening Jewish Vitality. Bar Ilan University; (3) Staetsky, L. D. and Boyd, J. 2015. *Strictly Orthodox rising: what the demography of British Jews tells us about the future of the community*. JPR Report. [www.jpr.org.uk/documents/JPR\\_2015.Strictly\\_Orthodox\\_rising.What\\_the\\_demography\\_of\\_British\\_Jews\\_tells\\_us\\_about\\_the\\_future\\_of\\_the\\_community.pdf](http://www.jpr.org.uk/documents/JPR_2015.Strictly_Orthodox_rising.What_the_demography_of_British_Jews_tells_us_about_the_future_of_the_community.pdf).

- **The most recent developments in European Jewish migration.** As previously mentioned, political upheavals in the not so distant past resulted in mass movements of Jews away from Europe. Is the most recent migration balance more conducive to Jewish population growth in Europe?
- **The ways in which the question of ‘Who is a Jew?’ is answered by today’s Jewish communities.** This point has not been mentioned explicitly thus far, but it follows logically from the discussion of intermarriage and assimilation. *Halachah* (Jewish law) defines a Jew as a person born to a Jewish mother or a convert to Judaism according to Jewish law. This definition still constitutes the normative criterion for many, perhaps most, Jews. At the same time, efforts are apparent to find new definitions of Jewish group identity and new meanings to community attachment. Multiple options of identificational choice range from the more traditional definitions along religious lines, through Jewish ethnicity and attraction to Judaism as a culture. Patrilineal or other descent criteria may constitute the reality or preferred choice of people who wish to be attached to a Jewish community. Jewish identity may increasingly become one element of multiple identities which include other cultural, ethnic, or religious components. New ways of self-identification may vary from one Jewish community to another, but all of them ought to be examined by demographers of Jewish populations. Is the real life definition of Jewishness evolving? If so, how? When we tell the Jewish demographic story, which definition should we use? Do our conclusions about growth change when the definitions change?
- **The policy and planning needs of Jewish community leaders and professionals.** It is possible to draw up a reasonable list of the main communal needs in all countries in Europe, based both on existing research, and accumulated collective experience. For example, and just to mention a few keywords, issues such as: alienation from Jewish communal life; demographic decline; declining levels of Jewish knowledge; economic sustainability; marriage and intermarriage; levels of religious practice and observance; poverty and deprivation; facilities for children and the elderly; levels of antisemitism; patterns of migration; relationship to Israel; leadership development, etc. These issues cut across all communities, albeit to varying degrees and one community is likely to rank them in importance differently from another.<sup>26</sup> We believe that there are powerful commonalities cutting across local situations. Every one of them requires an analytical framework, sources of data, data processing and analysis, report writing, dissemination and discussion, and finally, concrete decision-making aimed at addressing the challenges, both locally and transnationally.

## Summary

In the first chapter of this paper we presented a panoramic view of the fundamentals of European Jewish demography, emphasising both its established aspects and those in need of development. In so doing, we have implicitly outlined the actual agenda of the new European Demography Unit. The science of demography is, in effect, a study of the proverbial questions of ‘life and death’ in application to human populations. Thus, European Jewish demography matters as long as, and as far as, European Jewry matters at all.

26 For ranking of these items by Jewish communal leaders see JDC International Centre for Community Development and American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee. 2018. *Fourth survey of European Jewish community leaders and professionals*, 2018.

## 2 / Demography and earthly affairs

### Doubts old and new

The study of Jewish demography may sometimes appear to be overly academic, detached, aloof and, consequently, of secondary importance to the daily concerns of Jewish communities and individuals. Indeed, academic institutions are often known for, and/or accused of, a certain detachment from mainstream concerns, particularly those of policy makers, hence the expression 'ivory tower'. To be fair, such detachment is by no means absolute and, at times, is necessary for the sake of independence and the quality of fundamental research. However, in our assessment, it is important for researchers in the area of Jewish demography and statistics to maintain a healthy balance in this respect. One consequence of detachment from the everyday concerns of the potential users of research is that individuals, charities and commercial operators doubt the usefulness of scientific investigations and/or find it difficult to put the findings to use. They then become cynical, frustrated and disenchanted with a science that seems unresponsive to their needs, or seems to complicate more than it solves.

It is worth noting how long-standing complaints about the 'limited use' of social statistics and demography are. After completing a scientific trip in Eastern Europe in the late nineteenth century, and having witnessed the state of shtetl life, the Yiddish poet I.L. Peretz summarised his thoughts as follows: "What will be the upshot of statistics? Will statistics tell us how much suffering is needed – empty bellies and unused teeth; hunger so intense that the sight of a dry crust of bread will make the eyes bulge in

their sockets, as if drawn out by pliers; indeed, actual death by starvation – to produce an unlicensed gin mill, a burglar, a horse thief? While medical science has perfected an instrument for recording the heartbeat, statistical science toys with inane numbers."<sup>27</sup> Note the emphasis and the distinctions made by Peretz: medicine is useful, unlike statistics, because medicine relieves suffering, while statistics conduct irrelevant inquiries. It is easy to understand how such a characterisation of statistics could arise in view of the vivid descriptions of the starvation and destitution that demanded immediate relief, but it is erroneous. The relief of hunger in a comprehensive manner – should someone be tasked with it – would be impossible without defining and counting those in need of such relief, and then allocating provisions, medicines, transport and experts on this basis. The prevention of hunger – should that become a priority – is equally impossible without first consolidating some economic indicators concerning the population in question and documenting their behaviour over time and in response to interventions.

Peretz was not the last person to doubt the value of socio-demographic data collection. Whilst we have gone a long way towards a more appreciative and less embittered view of social science, such doubts and doubters exist today, although their character has changed. Our impression, based on a journey through the Jewish communities of Europe undertaken over the course of 2018 and conducted as part of a scientific project, is that the value of scientific studies, and statistical studies in particular, is well understood by Jewish community leaders.

27 Peretz, I.L. 1990. Impressions of a journey through the Tomaszow region, in Wisse, R. (ed.) *The I.L. Peretz Reader*. New York: Schocken Books.



**One consequence of detachment from the everyday concerns of the potential users of research is that individuals, charities and commercial operators doubt the usefulness of scientific investigations and/or find it difficult to put the findings to use**

That attitude, no doubt, has something to do with the currently high educational and socio-economic levels of European Jews, and the fact that their scientific horizons are wide and their existential material needs are, by and large, being met. It also has something to do with the relative maturity of the uses of social statistics in policy today, as contrasted with the beginning of the twentieth century. Yet, many communal leaders and representatives asked questions. How does one distinguish between a high quality essential scientific project and a low quality, unnecessary project? How does one reconcile conflicting numbers and recommendations arising from different projects? How does one bring order into what often appears to be a flood of information in a state of disarray? Is there a way to prove the impact of a certain project on a community? These selected examples show the general theme: questioning, when it takes place, is inquisitive rather than undermining; it is rather scholarly and demanding. It asks for better orientation and help with discernment at an advanced level. A serious research endeavour will be conscious of these questions, bear in mind these realities and be ready to explain, guide and be challenged when socio-demographic research is conducted in and for European Jewish communities.

## Examples old and new

It is important to note that the main demographic data collection method, e.g. censuses, is of ancient origin, and, on this basis alone cannot

be suspected of being the hobby horse of a whimsical academic. The first reports of censuses, such as the reports contained in the fourth book of the Torah (*Bemidbar/Numbers*, 1 and 26), make it plain that they are conducted to serve very practical purposes: on two occasions the leaders of the Jewish People – Moses, Aaron and Eleazar – are instructed to conduct a census to both establish the number of men capable of bearing arms and to divide the land between the different Jewish tribes according to their numerical strength. The first of these purposes – administration, and the organisation of defence in particular – is explicit in both censuses mentioned in *Bemidbar*: “And the Lord spoke unto Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the tent of meeting, on the first day of the second month, in the second year after they were come out of Egypt, saying: take the sum of all the congregation of the children of Israel, by their families, by their fathers’ houses, according to the number of names, every male, by their polls; from twenty years old and upward, all that are able to go forth to war in Israel...”. The second purpose – which can be best defined as welfare and justice in modern terms – is explicit in the second census in *Bemidbar*: ‘Unto these the land shall be divided for an inheritance according to the number of names. To the more you shall give the more inheritance, and to the fewer you shall give the less inheritance; to each one according to those that were numbered of it shall its inheritance be given’.

The beginnings of modern censuses were informed, essentially, by the same concerns. The first modern British census, conducted in 1801, was a response to at least two key concerns: the military conflict between Britain and France and the containment of poverty. The military conflict made it imperative to understand the size of the population body that could be recruited to war. The debates on the appropriate ways to relieve poverty critically depended on an understanding of the development in size of the British population. The beginning of the nineteenth century in Britain was marked by uncertainty as to whether the population of the country had been declining, increasing or

stable.<sup>28</sup> The work of Thomas Malthus, who is considered to be the founder of demographic science, described population size as a function of the material resources available. Malthus argued that when a population multiplies too much hunger ensues and reduces the population size through increased mortality. Malthus's work was vigorously discussed by British intellectuals at the time. Irrespective of the discussants' ideological tendencies, debate about the appropriateness of concrete measures of poverty relief could not move up a gear without a knowledge of population trends. The first modern British census started a tradition of census-taking that continues to this day, and that was complemented in 1837 by the system of registering births, marriages and deaths.

And if another illustration of the critical importance of socio-demographic data collection is needed, then the history of the Israeli census will do well for this purpose. The first Israeli census was carried out in November 1948, during the War of Independence. Indeed, the work of the census enumerators took place notwithstanding the fighting, shelling and war-related scarcity going on. The urgency to conduct a census stemmed from the fact that a full enumeration of the citizens of the newly created State of Israel was necessary for distributing identity papers, which, in itself, was a precondition for conducting the first parliamentary election.<sup>29</sup> The census results were subsequently used for the creation of a population registry – the backbone of the Israeli system of demographic accounting to this day and the source of population data on deaths, births, marriages, divorces and internal migration of all Israelis. Population administration as a motivating factor for demographic data collection – a theme identified in the biblical sources – is again apparent here. The determination of

the nascent Israeli government to carry out the enumeration of citizens under conditions of existential threat is nothing short of extraordinary. It is probably the most convincing example of the contemporary status of socio-demographic data collection as a supporting pillar of governance, rather than as a purely academic pursuit.



**In the United Kingdom, Israel and elsewhere in the developed world, the operations of all branches of government, commercial bodies and civil society depend critically on the statistics produced by population data systems**

In the United Kingdom, Israel and elsewhere in the developed world, the operations of all branches of government, commercial bodies and civil society depend critically on the statistics produced by population data systems, including the census and the registration systems of life events and, whilst their creation in the first place had to be vigorously justified and defended by early statisticians, their 'undoing' is utterly unthinkable at present. To be sure, modern censuses are quite unlike their early versions: they ask more questions, they rely on elaborate methodologies and they are at times integrated with other large datasets used for government or service provision (e.g. employment and medical registers). The transformation of censuses has been described, somewhat humorously, as another type of demographic transition.<sup>30</sup> Yet, from a historical perspective, population data systems are strengthening, not going away.

28 A good overview of these debates is offered by the two sources: (1) Wrigley, E.A. 1983. The growth of population in eighteenth century England: a conundrum resolved, *Past and Present* 98: 121–150, and (2) Glass, D.V. 1973. *The population controversy*. Farnborough: Gregg Publishing.

29 Interested readers can find more information on the first Israeli census in: Bachi, R. 1974. *The Population of Israel*. Jerusalem: The Hebrew University, Jewish Population Studies n. 11.

30 For the historical development of censuses in the Western world, see: Coleman, D. 2012. The twilight of the census, *Population and Development Review* 38 (Supplement): 334–351.

## A chicken and egg question resolved

Phenomena with a long history often present a 'chicken and egg' question in relation to the primacy of the material versus the intellectual driving forces. Take the example of the development of modern capitalism and contemporary prosperity. Was it driven by technical and industrial innovations, or by the change in societal values and attitudes towards science, religion, government and individual life? Which came first, even if, at a later stage, both types of drivers worked in tandem? The account of the development of population data collection, as outlined above, strongly points to the material side as the primary driver. Practical material concerns, i.e. the management of resources in the broadest possible sense, set the scene for the implementation of population data collection. None of the earliest data collectors were statisticians. However, gradually, population statistics developed as a branch of science, alongside other modern sciences. Just like other sciences, it acquired methods and theories, summarised in textbooks and manuals, and numerous practitioners. These developments contributed to the further advancement and diversification of the uses of population data. Most significantly, commercial operators – e.g. producers of goods and services – started to use and collect socio-demographic data to better understand their markets and customers. These developments produce a chain reaction, in a loop: new types of data and new methods of collection arise in response to new uses, and these, in turn, promote new uses. However, the primacy of practical, material concerns from the beginning should not be forgotten.

## How Jewish communities use socio-demographic data

When it comes to socio-demographic data, Jewish communal needs are no different, in essence, from the needs of all other data consumers, be they branches of government, commercial bodies or charitable organisations.

Organised Jewish communities provide or support religious services and security for all Jews requiring such services, communal social services directed at men and women, the elderly and the young, the affluent and the poor. Irrespective of the precise nature of these tasks, they require numerical insight into the characteristics of the service consumers: their number, geographical distribution, internal composition, as well as the future trends in relation to all these. Today is the time to plan and lay the grounds for tomorrow, and what is in place today depends on the foresights of the past, so projecting into the future is a key to the development of efficient policy.

Table 1 presents a small selection of questions received by the Institute for Jewish Policy Research in the course of the past two years of operation, from various Jewish communal bodies and individuals, and from those outside the Jewish community whose activities aimed to support the community in some way.

The table lists the nature of activity that motivated the question (column B), the type of data necessary to address the question (column C), and the sources that expert statisticians would typically use to generate such data (D). Note that some of the questions are focused on administration, security and welfare provision, not unlike the concerns of the ancient Jews transmitted to us by the Torah. Others represent more modern uses, such as the development of educational content and commercial operations.

The most important point about these questions is that they are impossible to address without solid socio-demographic data collected and analysed well in advance of the particular time or concern that gives rise to the question. The second important point is that the types of data needed to address these questions, and the types of sources required to derive the data, are very demanding to develop and maintain, even in the largest Jewish communities of Europe. A single glance at column D will capture, for example, the frequent occurrence of censuses and surveys as data sources; the ability to conduct such

**Table 1. Selected topics of interest to Jewish communities**

(A) Question	(B) Activity	(C) Necessary data	(D) Sources of data
How many Jewish families and individuals attend a synagogue on an average Shabbat across the UK and France?	Security services provision	Number of Jewish households and individuals by frequency of synagogue attendance	Census; administrative databases; surveys of Jewish religious practice
How many Jewish women in the UK attend a ritual bath ( <i>mikvah</i> ) on a regular basis?	Ritual services provision	Number of Jewish women by age, marital status and degree of religiosity	Census; administrative databases; surveys of Jewish religious practice
What is the average household size of a strictly Orthodox Jewish household?	Welfare provision	Number of Jewish households and people across these households by degree of religiosity	Census; surveys; administrative databases of strictly Orthodox community
How to decide between the two conflicting figures relating to the number of Jews in Hungary?	Commercial operations	Understanding of sources used to establish the number of Jews in a given country, uncertainty behind the definition of Jewishness and the number of births, deaths	Census; administrative databases; population registration of births, deaths and migration movements
How many pupils will attend 1st Grade in a Jewish school in our country in 2022?	Education	Number of Jewish children born in 2016; information and hypotheses about intervening changes in the number of children born; information on the propensity of Jewish parents to enrol their children in the Jewish educational system	Census; administrative data bases; population registration of births, deaths and migration movements
Are Jews rich?	Interfaith work	Proportionate distribution of Jews and non-Jews by education and income	Census, surveys
Do Jews live longer than non-Jews?	Public health education and welfare provision	Life expectancy of Jews and non-Jews	Census and death registration

data collection exercises cannot be assumed, let alone guaranteed, at a Jewish communal level. Jewish communities across Europe vary in size, but, wherever they are located, they are still small, or very small, compared to the size of the total population in any given country. The entire infrastructure required for research exercises of the kind described in the table above, especially if implemented regularly – expertise, equipment, finances – comes close to the level of a specialised statistical agency, at the least.

Certain European Jewish communities possess research units that collect, analyse and publish data about their communities. The research units of the Board of Deputies of British Jews in the UK (now managed by the Institute for Jewish Policy Research) and of the Central Council of Jews in Germany are perhaps the best known examples in this respect. A great number of smaller Jewish communities maintain membership registration systems that allow the

monitoring of their size, and they may or may not choose to publish their figures, or subject them to expert statistical analysis. Those Jewish populations and communities living in countries where censuses and social surveys allow the possibility of identifying Jews within the dataset, benefit from the secondary analysis of these sources, conducted at times by experts connected to the Jewish community. Finally, in many countries, local social surveys of Jewish populations have been carried out, either by extra-communal agencies in need of data on Jewish communities or by independent scholars, often connected with the communities. Nowhere, however, can a system of socio-demographic data that is comparable to a standard Western national statistical office be found. Nowhere is the state of Jewish demography and social statistics immediately responsive to all questions that are routinely presented in these areas in the context of modern societies and economies.

To reproach Jewish communities for their inadequate attention to the collection of socio-demographic data would be somewhat disingenuous. A lot has been done, and is being done, with their support. Also, the competition is strong. Jewish communities develop and maintain facilities for the elderly, the vulnerable, the young and the ill. These are often urgent priorities for the allocation of communal budgets, understandably so. Such competing causes also exist at the level of the nation state; however, statistical agencies and their operations are codified in law and understood as integral elements of governance. This makes gathering socio-demographic data a protected activity. Add to this the sheer size of societies and economies that support such activities and both the disadvantage of Jewish communities and the possible avenues for intervention become clear. Thus, while the planning and data needs of Jewish communities are no different in essence from the rest of the population, their ability to meet these needs may be compromised at times. Rather than bemoaning the status of socio-demographic data collection by and for Jewish communities as a victim of circumstances, we maintain that the circumstances make this subject area a strong candidate for an extra-communal and a supra-communal philanthropic action.

## **A case study of Jewish communal uses of socio-demographic data**

The history of planning for Jewish secondary school provision in England is a good case study of what happens when policy development and planning are based on socio-demographic data, and what happens in the absence of such planning. A very considerable proportion of Jewish children in the UK, about 63%, is educated in Jewish schools, i.e. day schools providing general education with a Jewish

educational component and Jewish ethos. The popularity of Jewish schools in the Jewish community has grown over time and has been driven by a mixture of factors including, among others, the cultural diversification of British society as a whole, high educational standards maintained by the Jewish schools, parental dissatisfaction with the state school system, a desire for children to cultivate a strong Jewish identity, and the growth of the strictly Orthodox Jewish population. The attitude of the British educational system is supportive of faith schools in principle, and the British Jewish community has created a large network of Jewish schools, with state support. 139 Jewish schools were operating in the United Kingdom in 2014/15, and about 40% of these were 'state schools,' i.e. in receipt of state funds and implementing the national curriculum.<sup>31</sup> Until the establishment of Jewish schools became a major communal priority in the 1990s, there was little, if any, communal concern or discussion about an inadequate supply of places for Jewish children in the existing Jewish schools. At the initial stages of the 'growth spurt' of the British Jewish school system, when the demand for places in Jewish schools clearly outstripped the supply, the need for careful planning of school places and locations was not felt acutely. However, at a more advanced stage, when the system of Jewish schooling had further matured, this need became apparent. It became clear to all policy makers in this area that, whilst the demand for Jewish schooling, by and large, had been satisfied, there were still small pockets of unmet demand, and the focus shifted to satisfying the demand on the small scale. Determining accurately how many spaces were needed, and how many would be taken up, became an issue of increasing concern, with significant financial and emotional implications.

The debate around the appropriate methods of meeting the continuing demand for Jewish schooling, especially at the level of secondary

31 For further details see: Staetsky, L. Daniel and Boyd, J. 2016. *The rise and rise of Jewish schools in the United Kingdom: number, trends and policy issues*. London: Institute for Jewish Policy Research.

schooling, has been well documented by the British Jewish press.<sup>32</sup> It reveals great anxiety around a host of issues, notably: the perceived inadequate supply of places and the personal dramas after children were rejected by the Jewish school system; the uncertainty regarding the location, religious flavour and capacity of the new school/s – should these be opened; the actual scope of unmet demand and the consequences of getting the number or the location ‘wrong.’ The solution finally came in 2017 when, following the allocation of the appropriate funds and employment of professional advice, the British Jewish community put in place a system of projections of Jewish secondary school places. The projections, fully reliant on socio-demographic data and scientific methods, have brought considerable precision and calm into the functioning of the Jewish secondary school system. However, it is said that preventive measures are victims of their own success. When they succeed, the scope of the averted ‘disaster’ and, consequently, the value of these measures, often remain unclear to the casual observer.

The projections completely re-shaped the British Jewish communal conversation about the state of the demand and supply of Jewish secondary school places. Suffice it to say that independent plans for four new Jewish secondary schools had been tabled in front of Jewish communal organisations and local authorities in the short period preceding the publication of the projections. After the publication of the

projections, the more dramatic and large-scale plans to expand provision (e.g. the opening of a new Jewish secondary school in London) were removed from the agenda entirely. The small-scale solutions (e.g. a slight increase in the supply and flexibility of existing Jewish schools) were implemented with evident success.<sup>33</sup> The numerical benchmarks and signs of a balanced system, i.e. a system in which the supply meets the demand, have been found.



**The key point is that the existence of high quality socio-demographic data and scholarly expertise can bring empirical clarity to any number of challenging communal issues, and, as a result, inform more effective policy solutions**

Jewish communities in Europe differ in size, scope and programmatic priorities and, consequently, in the nature of the demand for socio-demographically-supported planning of the kind described here. Not every community needs a system of projections of school places as the British Jewish community did and now has. Yet the key point is that the existence of high quality socio-demographic data and scholarly expertise can bring empirical clarity to any number of challenging communal issues, and, as a result, inform more effective policy solutions.

32 See, for example, articles by Simon Rucker in the *Jewish Chronicle*, for just a few examples: ‘Hasmonean asks parents to fund additional places’, 8 July 2016, [www.thejc.com/community/community-life/160150/hasmonean-asks-parents-fund-additional-places](http://www.thejc.com/community/community-life/160150/hasmonean-asks-parents-fund-additional-places); ‘The politics and number lying behind the bid for a new school’, 14 July 2016, [www.thejc.com/comment-and-debate/analysis/160274/the-politics-and-numbers-lying-behind-bid-a-new-school](http://www.thejc.com/comment-and-debate/analysis/160274/the-politics-and-numbers-lying-behind-bid-a-new-school); ‘New initiative considered to help children with no Jewish secondary school place’, 10 August 2016, [www.thejc.com/news/uk-news/161727/new-initiative-considered-help-children-no-jewishsecond](http://www.thejc.com/news/uk-news/161727/new-initiative-considered-help-children-no-jewishsecond); and ‘Effort to unify rival Orthodox free school bids’, 29 September 2016, [www.thejc.com/news/uk-news/164020/effort-unify-rival-orthodox-free-school-bids](http://www.thejc.com/news/uk-news/164020/effort-unify-rival-orthodox-free-school-bids).

33 To date, the results of the projections have been made available in two publications: (1) Staetsky, L. Daniel and Boyd, J. 2017. *Will my child get a place? An assessment of supply and demand of Jewish secondary school places in London and surrounding areas*. JPR Report. <https://archive.jpr.org.uk/download?id=3165>; (2) Staetsky, L. Daniel. 2019. *Projections of demand for places in state-funded mainstream Jewish secondary schools in London*. JPR Report. [www.jpr.org.uk/documents/JPR.Projections\\_of\\_demand\\_for\\_places\\_in\\_state-funded\\_mainstream\\_Jewish\\_secondary\\_schools\\_in\\_London.pdf](http://www.jpr.org.uk/documents/JPR.Projections_of_demand_for_places_in_state-funded_mainstream_Jewish_secondary_schools_in_London.pdf).

## 3 / Why a European Jewish demography unit?

Arguably, as a field of knowledge, European Jewish demography is in quite good shape. We can already confidently describe the basic demographic realities of Jewish Europe, such as the overall Jewish population size and distribution by country. The availability of such figures itself testifies to the existence of a significant enterprise of data collection. So, what will the new European Jewish Demography Unit at the Institute for Jewish Policy Research add to existing knowledge? What remains unknown that the Unit will be able to uncover? And how is the Unit linked to previous or ongoing enterprises of demographic data collection – those enterprises that have generated the existing data?

### The world we inherited

The monitoring of world Jewish population size and the demographic processes shaping Diaspora Jewry have been carried out to date by the Division of Jewish Demography and Statistics at the Institute of Contemporary Jewry at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Founded in 1960, it remained for several decades under the directorship of two luminaries of Jewish demography: Roberto Bachi (also the first Government Statistician of the State of Israel), and Uziel O. Schmelz. Between 1986 and 2010 the Division was directed by Sergio DellaPergola, and subsequently by Uzi Rebhun. Within the context of the Jewish Diaspora, Jewish demography and statistics as we know

them today have been strongly influenced by the demographic work produced by the Institute of Contemporary Jewry.<sup>34</sup>

However, the Institute of Contemporary Jewry itself is a successor to the European tradition of Jewish demography and statistics embodied in the work of organisations such as the Bureau for Jewish Statistics and Demography (founded by Arthur Rupp in Berlin in the early twentieth century) and the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research (founded in Vilnius in the 1920s). With the arrival of Nazism, these organisations were either dissolved or completely moved out of Europe. Many of the researchers associated with these organisations managed to escape to the USA and/or Israel and salvage their materials. Their movement resulted in the relocation of the centres of Jewish demography from Europe to Israel and the United States.<sup>35</sup> Consequently, the existing tradition of Jewish demography and statistics exemplified by the outputs of the Institute of Contemporary Jewry in Jerusalem arose from the symbiosis of the early European tradition and the Italian school of demography and political economy, which, albeit to different degrees, influenced all three directors of the demographic unit of the Institute. The first director, Roberto Bachi, trained under Corrado Gini, an eminent Italian demographer and statistician who was the creator of the universally used indicator of income inequality bearing his name: the Gini coefficient. Uziel Schmelz and Sergio DellaPergola were

34 Further illustration of this point can be found in Goldstein, S. 2015. Sergio DellaPergola's contributions to Jewish demography: an appreciation, in Lederhendler, E. and Rebhun, U. (eds.) *Research in Jewish Demography and Identity*. Boston: Academic Studies Press, 11–14.

35 Genealogies of Jewish demography and statistics can be traced in the following publications: Morris-Reich, A. 2019. Sociology and demography in modern Jewish history: towards a unified history, in Bell, D.B. (ed.) *The Routledge Companion to Jewish History and Historiography*; Hart, M. 2000. *Social Science and the Politics of Modern Jewish Identity*. Stanford: Stanford University Press; Bachi, R. 1997. Personal recollections on the history of research in Jewish demography, in DellaPergola, S. and J. Even (eds.) *Papers in Jewish Demography 1993*. Jerusalem: The Hebrew University, 33–37.

subsequently trained by Bachi, and Uzi Rebhun was trained by DellaPergola.

This is important. The study of 'Jewish demography' developed by the Institute of Contemporary Jewry in Jerusalem has been 'demography' first and 'Jewish' second, i.e. it formed and functioned as a branch of demographic science, with an uncompromising application of demographic theory and methodology. The field of Jewish studies is of enormous relevance, but it is a field which provides inspiration (from Jewish history, in particular) and opportunities for its application (especially in communal policy), rather than scientific tools and principles.

The Institute for Jewish Policy Research (JPR) is a research facility based in the UK since the 1960s. JPR was originally established in the United States in 1941 as the research arm of the World Jewish Congress, under the name the Institute of Jewish Affairs. Whilst the Institute's agenda has evolved over time, it has always mirrored the core concerns of the Jewish people, and it has always undertaken projects with the explicit aim of informing policy. At the time of the Cold War, for example, it undertook extensive research into anti-Zionist discourse, the 'Jewish policy' of the communist bloc led by the Soviet Union and the demographic and social characteristics of Eastern European and Soviet Jewry. In the aftermath of the Cold War, the Institute's programme focused on the collection and analysis of socio-demographic data pertaining to the British and other European Jewish communities, with an orientation towards policy development in the broadest sense. In the past twenty-five years, JPR has conducted a number of communal surveys in the United Kingdom, including a survey of the social and political attitudes of British Jews (1995), a survey of the attitudes of British Jews towards Israel (2010), the National Jewish Community Survey (2013), as well as two pan-European surveys of the experiences and perceptions of antisemitism among Jews (2012 and 2018), on behalf of the

European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights. JPR has also produced several analyses of British census data on British Jewry, undertaken a major study of the attitudes of the population of Great Britain towards Jews and Israel, and conducted numerous commissioned studies for organisations working both within and with Jewish communities in the UK, across Europe and beyond. These activities, in combination, have resulted in the accumulation of a large body of knowledge on the demographic, social and economic characteristics of Jews in the UK and Europe, their patterns of Jewish identity and the 'politics of Jewishness', i.e. the attitudes towards Jews and the attitudes of Jews towards the people surrounding them.



### **JPR's particular strength is its commitment to the use of scientific knowledge to develop answers to concrete policy questions**

JPR's particular strength is its commitment to the use of scientific knowledge to develop answers to concrete policy questions. Summarising across twenty-five years of activity is not easy but it merits saying that in that time JPR has become an authority on surveying Jews and has acted in this capacity in its relationships with statistical and political bodies such as the Office for National Statistics in the UK and the European Commission, as well as numerous Jewish charities and foundations, and the commercial sector. After many years of uncertainty and unnecessary disarray of action and thought at a communal level, JPR can be credited with generating policy insights in numerous areas, including projected supply and demand for places in Jewish schools; projections of demand for care in elderly care homes; mapping the prevalence of learning disabilities among Jews; assessing the housing needs of elderly and disadvantaged Jews; informing local community development plans based on Jewish population assessments and projections; developing empirical insights about

compositional, religious and cultural changes in Jewish populations; and shaping communal understanding and thought about synagogue membership. Capitalising on its insights and resources, JPR remains a chief producer of evidence-based non-partisan commentary on antisemitism and the 'politics of Jewishness'.

## Our scientific methodology

The new European Jewish Demography Unit is designed to inherit and develop the body of demographic knowledge in the style and tradition of the demographic unit at the Institute of Contemporary Jewry, and to build on the strengths of JPR in turning socio-demographic research into policy, both nationally and globally. The fundamentals of Jewish demography are well established, and DellaPergola's *Jewish demography: fundamentals of the research field*, which captures in more detail the intellectual and methodological tradition of Jewish demography, is methodologically foundational for the Unit's operations.<sup>36</sup>

European Jewish population size, across the entire continent, is reasonably well documented. 'Reasonably well', however, does not mean 'perfectly' – indeed, in relation to several countries and types of data there is considerable room for improvement. There is some degree of uncertainty about Jewish population sizes in several European countries. Some are affected by known deficiencies in terms of data quality, others are just suspected of falling short of the required level of accuracy. The desired improvement may mean, in certain instances, coming up with better grounded estimates of Jewish population size, in terms of the quality of sources underlying the estimates. Key examples of countries where this type of boost in quality is warranted include Belgium and Spain: neither has a national census or a register identifying Jews as a specific group, so there is a considerable degree of conjecture

behind the currently published Jewish population sizes for these countries. In other countries, Jewish population size estimates may be grounded in theoretically-acceptable sources, but the numbers furnished by these sources appear to be somewhat questionable, or are often challenged by researchers and policy makers. Key examples include Poland and Hungary where national censuses are suspected of undercounting Jews. Careful re-evaluation of all existing sources of Jewish population data, alongside searches for new sources, is necessary in these and other cases.



**European Jewish population size, across the entire continent, is reasonably well documented. 'Reasonably well', however, does not mean 'perfectly'**

In the most fundamental, technical demographic terms, much of the Unit's work will focus on estimating the terms of the 'demographic equation' for the Jewish population of Europe. Estimating the terms of the demographic equation is the most precise and secure way to think about any population's past, present and future, and is outlined and explained briefly below. It is adapted to the realities of ethnic and religious population groups, which are somewhat different from the populations of entire countries.

In the equation below, P(t) signifies the population size at any point in time, called t, and P(t-1) is the population size at a preceding point in time. B and D stand for the number of births and deaths, respectively, I and E stand for immigration into and emigration from the given population. A and S stand for accessions and secessions and are the numbers of conversions in and out, respectively.

$$P(t) = P(t-1) + (B-D) + (I-E) + (A-S)$$

36 DellaPergola, S. 2014. Jewish Demography: Fundamentals of the Research Field. In: Rebhun, U. (ed.) *The Social Scientific Study of Jewry: Sources, Approaches, Debates*. Studies in Contemporary Jewry. An Annual XXVII. New York: The Avraham Harman Institute of Contemporary Jewry, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem and Oxford University Press, 3–36.

This mathematical description of the Unit's activities is, in effect, a proper, scholarly formulation of the way in which a story of the life and death of populations is told by demographic science. The only way for a population to grow is to acquire new members as a result of births or immigration, although ethnic and religious groups have an additional channel of growth, at least potentially: they can grow through 'accessions,' e.g. religious conversions and other methods of 'opting in.' These additive terms are coloured in red. The only way for a population to decline is to lose members as a result of deaths or migration, or – as is the case with ethnic and religious groups – also through 'secessions,' e.g. conversions out. These are terms coloured in blue. Any statement about the current, past or future population size of any group will have to take into account all of these elements.

Self-evidently, the demographic equation integrates information about population sizes with information about processes that build the populations, namely, fertility, mortality, migration and identificational movements in and out of Jewishness. Understanding the current state of the demographic equation and predicting its future state requires an in-depth study of these processes, i.e. the rates at which all the mentioned processes operate.

## Our sources

National systems of demographic and social statistics, typically maintained by their statistical offices, usually populate the terms of the demographic equation by drawing on a selection of conventional resources: population censuses and registers, social surveys and administrative files of various organisations and services. In terms of its sources, the Unit will similarly follow established demographic tradition, with an eye on emerging, new and previously unexplored sources and types of data and their potential contribution to Jewish demography.

Table 2 presents a summary of the available sources for the Jewish populations of 39 European

countries. These sources have been utilised by the Institute of Contemporary Jewry in the production of Jewish population counts to date.

For the purpose of documenting population size, structure and composition, censuses or population registers are the most important. Depending on culture and tradition, Jews may be identified as a religious group (and captured by a religion question, as is the case in the United Kingdom) or as an ethnic group (in which case they are captured by a question on ethnicity, as is the case in the former Soviet countries and Soviet satellites in Eastern Europe). A cursory look at Table 2 (column B) gives the impression that Jews are identifiable as such in most countries of Europe. Thus the work of the Unit will focus closely on the data available from population censuses and registers.

Equally important for documenting the population size and characteristics of Jewish populations are large-scale national surveys. This resource is a relatively recent candidate for application in the field of Jewish demography and social statistics, and it has so far attracted only very limited attention by Jewish demographers. Just like censuses and population registers, national surveys can serve as a source of Jewish population counts and characteristics, in addition to, or as a replacement for, censuses. Large scale national surveys – such as the Annual Population Survey (APS), the General Practitioners Patient Survey (GPPS) and the Crime Survey in the UK – cover very large samples of the national population, and they have the potential to contain large subsamples of Jews simply as a by-product of their size. Moreover, the growing interest in the ethnic and religious diversity of Western societies and the differentiation of social and demographic experiences along these lines have encouraged national statistical authorities and research institutes to include religion and ethnicity variables in their surveys, so, as a result, Jews can be identified in them as such. An examination of column D confirms that, whilst large surveys exist in many, if not all, countries of Europe, their potential in relation to Jewish

**Table 2. Presence of information on Jews in demographic and social sources, by country**

(A) Country	(B) Census/ Population Register	(C) Administrative Sources (e.g. civil registration )	(D) National surveys	(E) Jewish communal registers	(F) Surveys of local Jewish community	(G) Estimated core Jewish population 2018*
Austria	Yes	Yes	Unknown	Yes	Yes	9,000
Belarus	Yes	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	9,500
Belgium	No	No	Unknown	Yes	Yes	29,200
Bosnia-Herzegovina	Yes	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	500
Bulgaria	Yes	Unknown	Unknown	Yes	Unknown	2,000
Croatia	Yes	Unknown	Unknown	Yes	Unknown	1,700
Cyprus	No	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	100
Czech Republic	Yes	Unknown	Unknown	Yes	Unknown	3,900
Denmark	No	Unknown	Unknown	Yes	Yes	6,400
Estonia	Yes	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	1,900
Finland	Yes	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	1,300
France	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	453,000
Germany	No	No	Unknown	Yes	Yes	116,000
Gibraltar	Yes	Unknown	Unknown	Yes	Unknown	600
Greece	No	Unknown	Unknown	Yes	Unknown	4,200
Hungary	Yes	Unknown	Unknown	Yes	Yes	47,400
Ireland	Yes	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	2,600
Italy	No	No	Unknown	Yes	Yes	27,500
Latvia	Yes	Unknown	Unknown	Yes	Yes	4,700
Lithuania	Yes	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	2,500
Luxembourg	No	Unknown	Unknown	Yes	Unknown	600
Malta	No	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	100
Moldova	Yes	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	2,000
Netherlands	No	Unknown	Unknown	Yes	Yes	29,800
North Macedonia	Yes	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	100
Norway	Yes	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	1,300
Poland	Yes	Unknown	Unknown	Yes	Yes	4,500
Portugal	Yes	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	600
Romania	Yes	Unknown	Unknown	Yes	Yes	9,100
Russia	Yes	Unknown	Yes	Unknown	Unknown	172,000
Serbia	Yes	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	1,400
Slovakia	Yes	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	2,600
Slovenia	Yes	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	100
Spain	No	Unknown	Unknown	Yes	Yes	11,700
Sweden	No	Unknown	Unknown	Yes	Yes	15,000
Switzerland	Yes	Unknown	Unknown	Yes	Unknown	18,600
Turkey	No	Unknown	Unknown	Yes	Yes	15,000
Ukraine	Yes	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	50,000
United Kingdom	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	290,000

\* DellaPergola, S. 2019. World Jewish Population 2018. In A. Dashefsky and I. Sheskin (eds.) *American Jewish Year Book 2018*. Cham: Springer.

statistics is unknown. They simply have not been assessed, although these data are suspected of being significant. The work of the Unit will prioritise mapping, analysis and assessment of the usefulness of such national surveys for Jewish demography and statistics.

National administrative sources of demographic and social statistics, such as civil registers of births and deaths, electoral registers, datasets of national health authorities, etc., constitute a significant and largely unexplored type of resource in Jewish demography and statistics. Some of these sources, alongside their demographic uses, are very well established: civil registration has been a source of data on births and deaths for many decades. Others – such as registers of national health authorities – are relatively new to demographers as they only became established and accessible with the arrival of the digital age. The common denominator in all these sources is that they have been created not for research but as a by-product of the operations of different agencies. Attempts to incorporate them into the statistical and demographic system are made universally by government statisticians in all developed countries. Indeed, such is their size, coverage and promise, that the development of these sources has created an atmosphere in which doubts are being raised regarding the necessity of traditional national censuses. As column C indicates, clarity in relation to the existence of such datasets, and the presence/absence of information within them about Jews, exist in six out of 39 countries (15%). The Unit will work intensively to identify the status of these new resources in relation to Jewish demography and statistics.

Jewish communal registers play an important role in the world of demographic data for two reasons. First, they provide the basis for the derivation of statistics for communally-engaged (or affiliated) Jews. Second, they may function as

a supplementary resource, or a replacement, of national censuses or registers. Column E clarifies which countries possess such registers: there is documented presence of such registers in 20 out of 39 countries (just above 50%). The United Kingdom has been at the forefront of this effort to document Jewish population movements in Europe.<sup>37</sup> The work of the Unit will focus closely on exploring existing Jewish registers and harmonising different counts, both across Jewish registers and between these registers and the national censuses. In addition, we will launch an extensive investigation in this area in those countries (49% of the total sample) where the existence and quality of Jewish communal registers is unknown and/or uncertain. We are aware that Jewish demographic and social statistics are widely perceived to be in disarray. We maintain that this is only partly true, and that the state of the field appears in disarray due to the lack of sustained effort focused on the harmonisation of different sources, and especially national censuses and records with Jewish communal registers.



**Large-scale national surveys are relatively recent candidates for application in the field of Jewish demography and social statistics, and have so far attracted only very limited attention by Jewish demographers**

Surveys of local Jewish communities (Column F), undertaken by research institutes, national or European bodies, or Jewish communities themselves, are methodologically connected to Jewish communal registers in the same way that national censuses and registers are connected to national surveys. Surveys supply a host of information on the demographic, socio-economic,

37 Vulkan, D. 2012. *Britain's Jewish Community Statistics 2010*. London: Board of Deputies of British Jews; Casale Mashiah, D., and Boyd, J. 2017. *Synagogue membership in the United Kingdom in 2016*. London: Institute for Jewish Policy Research. See also: Zentralwohlfahrtsstelle der Juden in Deutschland. 2018. *Mitgliederstatistik der jüdischen Gemeinde und Landesverbände in Deutschland für das Jahr 2017*. Frankfurt a.M: ZWJD.

and cultural characteristics of the Jewish population which is not available from other sources. Surveys supplement registers, and, when these are not available, replace them. The work of the Unit will examine the surveys of local Jewish communities alongside Jewish communal registers, with a focus on the harmonisation of the data. Surveys have been undertaken in the past in a few individual European countries, and in several countries simultaneously.<sup>38</sup>

The Unit aims to increase the scope and quality of sources of information about Jewish communities and populations of Europe, reducing the number of 'Unknown' cells in Table 2 and updating information in the existing cells. Three types of sources are especially relevant at present and will be targeted for immediate action:

**1 / New data arising from censuses, surveys, registration systems and communal records.** As time passes, new sources come to the surface. This may happen because population registration systems, censuses and sample surveys in European countries develop and, at some point, start incorporating data on ethnicity and/or religion, thereby facilitating the identification of Jews. Significant changes have occurred, for example, in the ways in which Jewishness is captured in the Polish census, and the consequences of these changes for Jewish

statistics in Poland have not been fully assessed. Previously unexplored Jewish communal sources are another example. Underinvestment in European Jewish demography prevented in-depth exploration of certain communal sources of socio-demographic data, with Austria and Belgium being two important examples, but not the only ones in this respect.

**2 / Two surveys of European Jews commissioned by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) in 2012 and 2018.**<sup>39</sup> Both surveys were conducted by Ipsos and the Institute for Jewish Policy Research (JPR). The former covered Jews in nine countries; the latter, Jews in thirteen countries. The principal subject of both surveys, from the point of view of the commissioner, was Jewish people's perceptions and experiences of antisemitism. However, the survey questionnaire included, on both occasions, extensive modules documenting Jewish socio-demographic profiles and identity. Several important studies of antisemitism, Jewish identity and the methodology of surveying Jews have been published on the back of the 2012 FRA survey.<sup>40</sup> However, the potential of these surveys for investigating European Jewish demography, socioeconomic stratification, and identification has not been fully unlocked to date.

- 38 DellaPergola, S. 1975. The Italian Jewish population study: Demographic characteristics and trends. In *Studies in Jewish demography: Survey for 1969–1971*, ed. U.O. Schmelz, P. Glikson, and S.J. Gould, 60–97. Jerusalem: The Hebrew University, Institute of Contemporary Jewry, and London: Institute of Jewish Affairs; Bensimon, D. and S. DellaPergola. 1984. *La population juive de France: socio-démographie et identité*. Jerusalem: The Hebrew University; Paris: Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique CNRS; van Solinge, H., and C. van Praag. 2010. *De Joden in Nederland anno 2009 continueit en verandering*. Diemen: AMB; Kovács, A., and I. Barna. 2010. *Identity à la carte: Research on Jewish identities, participation and affiliation in five European countries. Analysis of survey data*. Budapest: The American Joint Distribution Committee.
- 39 FRA – European Union Fundamental Rights Agency. 2013. *Discrimination and hate crime against Jews in EU Member States: Experiences and perceptions of antisemitism*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union; FRA – European Union Fundamental Rights Agency. 2018. *Discrimination and hate crime against Jews in EU Member States: Experiences and perceptions of antisemitism*. Vienna: European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights. 2018. *Experiences and perceptions of antisemitism. Second survey on discrimination and hate crimes against Jews in the EU*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.
- 40 Staetsky, L.D. and Boyd, J. 2014. *The Exceptional case? Perceptions and experiences of antisemitism among Jews in the United Kingdom*. JPR Report. July 2014, London: Institute for Jewish Policy Research; DellaPergola, S. and Staetsky, L.D. 2015. *From old and new directions: perceptions and experiences of antisemitism among Jews in Italy*. London: Institute for Jewish Policy Research; Dencik, L. and Marosi, K. 2017. *Different antisemitisms: perceptions and experiences of antisemitism among Jews in Sweden and across Europe*. London: Institute for Jewish Policy Research; Graham, D. 2018. *European Jewish identity: mosaic or monolith? An empirical assessment of eight European countries*. London: Institute for Jewish Policy Research; Staetsky, L. D. 2019. Can convenience samples be trusted? Lessons from the survey of Jews in Europe, 2012. *Contemporary Jewry*, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12397-019-09280-8>.

**3 / Genetic testing of ethnic ancestry in the commercial environment has made significant advances in the past decade.** From being a luxury pursuit in small and affluent circles, genetic ancestry testing has advanced to the point of becoming a mainstream activity. Major commercial operators in this area, such as Ancestry and MyHeritage, offer the public simple tests of ethnic ancestry based on the analysis of customers' specimens (of saliva or cells) collected by the individual using a pre-supplied testing kit. Genetic profiling of each specimen is carried out in a laboratory, and then mapped onto the known meta-profiles of various ethnic groups; the results reported to customers reveal the extent to which their genetic profile matches onto these. A by-product of such commercial activities – driven by curiosity about ancestry in the first place – is the creation of very large databases containing information on people with Jewish ancestry, by country. None of these data are available at an individual level, but they allow percentages of people with Jewish ancestry to be calculated, at various degrees, at a country level among the customers of a given commercial operator. It must be stressed that genetic testing of ethnic ancestry is a new development and various concerns have been expressed to date about the scientific validity of testing.<sup>41</sup> That said, the existence of typical Jewish genetic profiles is rather well documented, even prior

to the rise of commercial genetic testing.<sup>42</sup> Its relevance pertains mainly to the diagnostics and care of certain inherited diseases which appear to be more than proportionally spread among Jewish communities – especially those of Ashkenazi origin. Admittedly, commercial genetic ancestry testing today is very likely to attract people who are not representative of the general population of any country. Ancestry tests cost money which inevitably means that their use is limited to those who can afford them. Testing is predicated on the desire to learn something about one's ancestry, which is related to the level of education and perhaps intelligence. However, any selectivity of the customers seeking genetic ancestry testing is bound to diminish over time, as the tests become more affordable and more widely used for purposes other than ancestry testing (for example, in medicine and the insurance industry). Potentially, the databases of major commercial operators offering genetic testing could constitute a new source of information for Jewish demography, and while it is premature to relate to them as such at this point in time, their status deserves cautious monitoring and exploration. It is too early to include them within the classic set of demographic sources but it is not too early to start a scholarly conversation about whether or not they can qualify at some point and what conditions should be fulfilled for this to happen.

41 See especially: (1) Royal, C.D., Novembre, J., Fullerton, S.M., Goldstein, D.B., Long, G.C., Bamshad, M.J., and Clark, A.G. 2010. Inferring genetic ancestry: opportunities, challenges and implications, Commentary by the American Society for Human Genetics, and (2) Jobling, M.A., Rasteiro, R., and Wetton J.H. 2016. In the blood: the myth and reality of genetic markers of identity, *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 39 (2): 142–161.

42 A foundational paper on this subject: Ostrer, H. and Skorecki, K. 2013. The population genetics of the Jewish people, *Human Genetics* 132: 119–127, and references therein. See also Gladstein, A.I. and Hammer, M.F. 2019. Substructured Population Growth in the Ashkenazi Jews Inferred with Appropriate Bayesian Computation. *Molecular Biological Evolution*, 1–10.

## / Concluding remarks

This paper began with an overview of both the well-known and the yet to be explored issues of European Jewish demography. The peculiarities of Jewish demography were then juxtaposed against the generalities of the demographic condition of Western populations. It proceeded to demonstrate the practical sides and uses of demography, with the focus on its use by the Jewish community. Against this background we outlined the scientific and policy agenda of the new European Jewish Demography Unit at the Institute for Jewish Policy Research, a research unit of demography and social statistics of Jewish populations located in Europe, which will:

**1 /** develop a collection of datasets for each country that, in combination, will constitute a conventional system of demographic and statistical accounting resembling the systems existing on a national level and exemplified in the annual yearbooks of national statistical offices, such as the US Census Bureau, the Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics and the Office for National Statistics in England and Wales;

**2 /** make the demographic and social statistics pertaining to European Jewish populations available through a series of publications. Some of these publications will focus on specific demographic topics (e.g. migration)

and draw a cross-European picture, whilst others will be country-specific;

**3 /** identify the policy needs of European Jewish communities that involve the use of demographic data and introduce to European Jewish leaders the possible products for addressing these needs.

To our knowledge there has never before been a sustained attempt, on the scale suggested here, to think about and work with European Jewish demography in terms and categories of conventional demographic products – borrowing the logic, criteria and form of analysis and presentation from mainstream demographic science. The price that the community of users of European Jewish demographic data has paid for this has been considerable disorientation and uncertainty as to what is known, what is contested, how to decide between conflicting arguments, how to acquire new information, and fundamentally, how best to serve the needs and interests of Jews living in Europe today. Thus the new Unit comes, to paraphrase the words of Rabbi Moshe Haim Luzzatto,<sup>43</sup> “to teach ourselves and remind others” of the facts of European Jewish demography – to develop demographic science and improve policy to best serve the Jews of contemporary Europe.

43 Moshe Haim Luzzatto. *Sefer Mesilat Yesharim*, Introduction. 2014 edition. Jerusalem: Rabinovich-Teomim.



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