



# The Population of Israel

## 1. Introduction

2015 was characterized by minor changes in the size and demographic patterns of world Jewry. Of special significance: an increase in the number of Jewish inhabitants (and those of "no religion") in Israel by approximately 130,000; a rise in the number of new immigrants in Israel (a continuation of the trend observed in the last two years); and the stability of the high level of Jewish fertility in Israel – above three children per woman.

In light of the fact that Israel is home to the largest Jewish community in the world, 6.3 million out of, according to Sergio DellaPergola in the upcoming 2016 American Jewish Year Book, world Jewish population of 14.4 million at the beginning of this year,<sup>1</sup> the dynamic of its demographic patterns, and the ongoing scholarly and public discourse on the balance between Jews and non-Jews, we devote the demographic chapter of this year's Annual Assessment to the Israeli population. The heterogeneous composition of the population

requires detailed analysis of its demographic characteristics, follow-up over time, and evaluation of possible future developments. This should allow us to efficiently use the empirical evidence for policy-making conducive to the continued increase of the Jewish Israeli population and the Jewish character of the country, while also securing the status and equal rights of all its minority groups.

Jerusalem's special status as a capital city, its religious importance to Judaism, Islam and Christianity, and its being one of the more sensitive focal points in the Arab-Israeli conflict, led us to examine Jerusalem's population in detail. Add to this the events of summer-winter of 2015 – the rise in tensions between Jews and Arabs that has resulted in a spate of stabbing, car ramming, and even shooting attacks of individual residents of the city. The recent wave of attacks known as the "Lone-Wolf Intifada," although other parts of the country were not spared, was focused disproportionately on Jerusalem. It has awakened a debate on the status

of Jerusalem's Arab neighborhoods, both those within the security barrier and those on its other side. Although a political agreement between Israel and the Palestinian Authority doesn't seem close at this time, there is no doubt that any eventual deal will include Jerusalem. Religious, security, economic, and also demographic considerations will need to be taken into account.

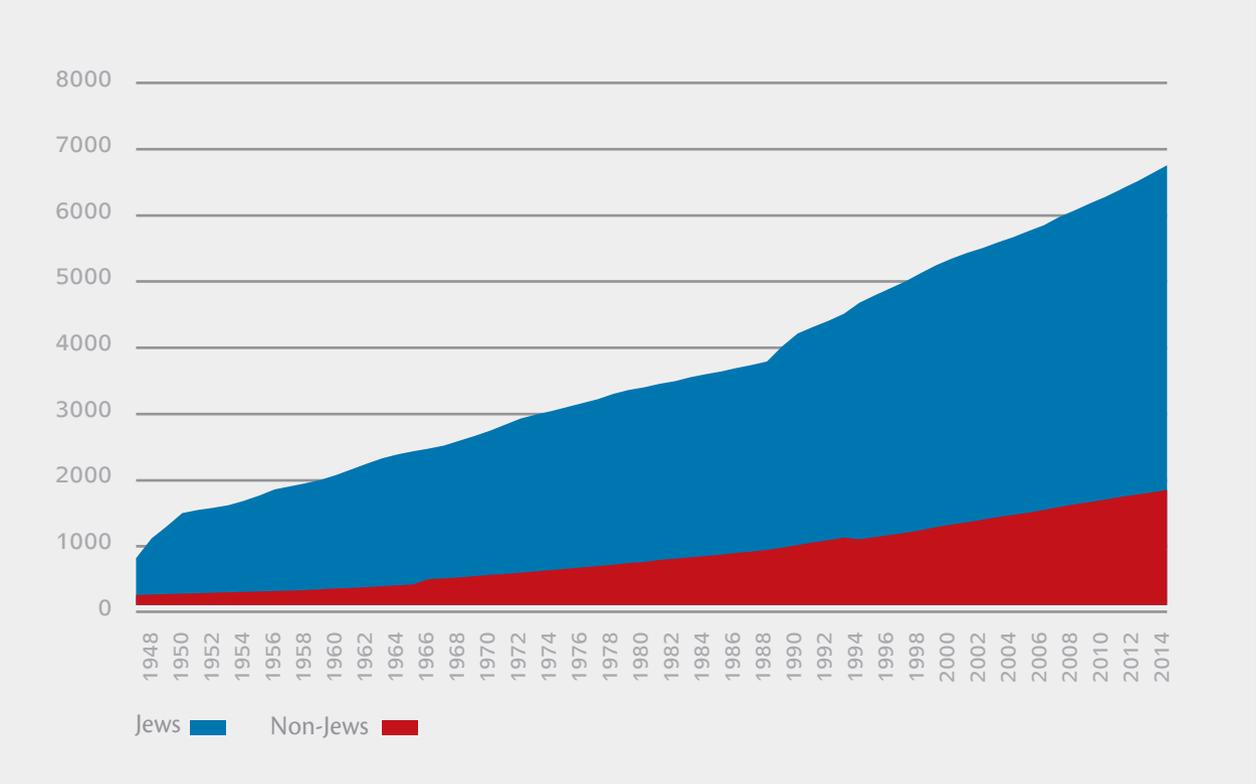
## 2. Size and Composition

When Israel was founded in 1948, its population was enumerated at 872,000 inhabitants (Figure 2.1). At the end of 2015, there were 8,464,100 people living in the country. Thus, in less than seven decades the population increased almost tenfold. This growth did not spread evenly over time: the population crossed the one million line in 1949; the two million line in 1958; three million in 1970; four million in 1982; five million in 1991; six million in 1998; seven million in 2006; and eight million in 2013. Hence, the number of years between population increases of one million has shortened over time.

The Jewish population and the non-Jewish population have each evolved at a different pace. While the number of Jews increased from 716,700 in 1948 to 6,706,400 at the beginning of 2015 – an increase factor of 9.4, the number of non-Jews increased from 156,000 to 1,757,700 in the same period, an increase factor of 11.3. Thus, the proportion of Jews out of the total Israeli population diminished somewhat from 82 to 79 percent (with fluctuations over time mainly caused by the number of new immigrants).

The Jewish population includes people with "no religion" most of whom are immigrants from the FSU who are not Halachically Jewish but have a Jewish background or some Jewish affinity making them eligible to settle in Israel under the Law of Return. Likewise, since 1967 the Jewish population has included Jews living in the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Golan Heights (and in the Gaza Strip in the period 1967-2005); the non-Jewish population, for its part, includes the Muslim, Christian, and Druze inhabitants of East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights.

**Figure 2.1 The Population of Israel, 1948-2015 (in Thousand)**



Adopted from: Central Bureau of Statistics (hereafter: CBS), Statistical Abstract of Israel, 2015; and Monthly Bulletin, February, 2016.

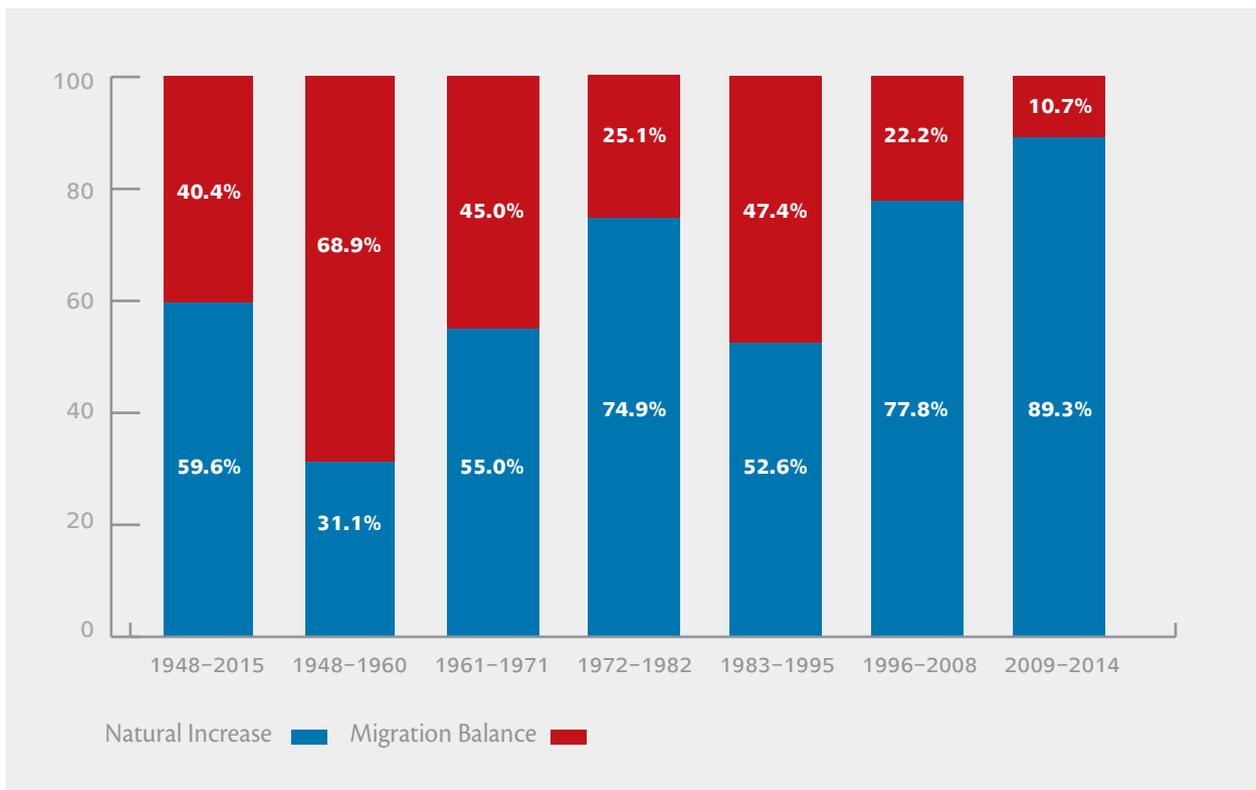
The non-Jewish population is not made of one cloth. Rather, it is comprised of Muslims, Christians, and Druze. Over time, the share of Muslims out of the total non-Jewish population has increased from slightly more than two-thirds in 1950 to 83 percent today; during the same time, the proportion of Christians has declined from about one-fifth to less than ten percent . The proportion of Druze among the non-Jewish population has changed little. These trends have mainly been the result of differences in fertility levels among the three sub-groups.

The sole source of growth of the non-Jewish population is natural movement, namely the differential between births and deaths. In contrast, the number of Jews is determined by two factors: natural movement, and international migration balance, i.e., immigration to Israel minus emigration of Jews from Israel. Over the course of statehood, out of the total Jewish population growth, 60 percent is attached to natural increase and 40 percent to positive migration balance (Figure 2.2).

A detailed look by decennial intervals postulates that the contribution of migration balance was especially salient during the first years of statehood: in the first decennial period (1948-1960) it accounted for two-thirds of the total growth. In the second decennial period (1961-1972) the rate of migration balance diminished to 45 percent of the total population increase, and from the 1972 census to the 1983 census it further

declined to only 25 percent. The large influx of Jews from the FSU, and to a lesser extent from Ethiopia, upended this trend, whereas between 1983 and 1995 the Jewish population increase was divided almost equally between natural movement and migration balance. Since then, we have witnessed a gradual decline in the role of migration, down to only 10.7 percent of the total Jewish population growth over the last five years.

**Figure 2.2 Sources of Jewish Population Growth, 1948-2015 (Percentages)**



Adopted from: CBS, Statistical Abstract of Israel, 2015.

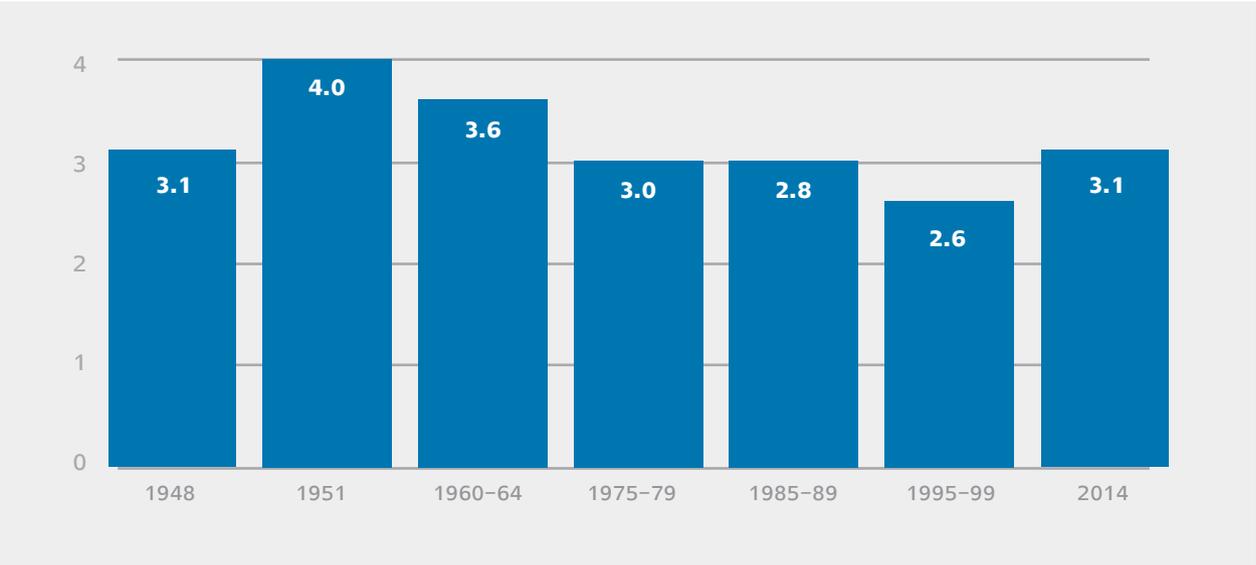
### 3. Fertility, Mortality, and International Migration

#### 3.1 Fertility

The fertility patterns of the Israeli population, measured here by the average number of children woman is expected to have over her life course (Total Fertility Rate), differs between Jews and non-Jews, and within each group by religious and ethnic affiliations. Likewise, fertility patterns are not constant and change over time. The number of children is affected, among other things, by educational attainment, employment status, level of religiosity, and familial characteristics such as age at marriage and stability of family.

When the state was founded each Israeli Jewish woman had, on average, 3.1 children (Figure 3.1). Shortly thereafter, the fertility level increased to 4 children largely due to the addition of a large number of immigrants from Asia and North Africa (Sephardim) who had large families (of 5-6 children). As time progressed, the Sephardic Jews gradually converged to the lower fertility level of their counterpart of European origin (Ashkenazim) who had, on average, 3 children. This tendency was not disrupted, albeit it was slowed by additional waves of immigration from North Africa. Overall, Jewish fertility in Israel diminished to 3 children in the second half of the 1970s, and further to 2.8 children on the eve of the large exodus from the Soviet Union.

Figure 3.1. Total Fertility Rate among Jewish Women in Israel, 1948-2014 (Selected Years)



Adopted from: CBS, Statistical Abstract of Israel, Selected Years.

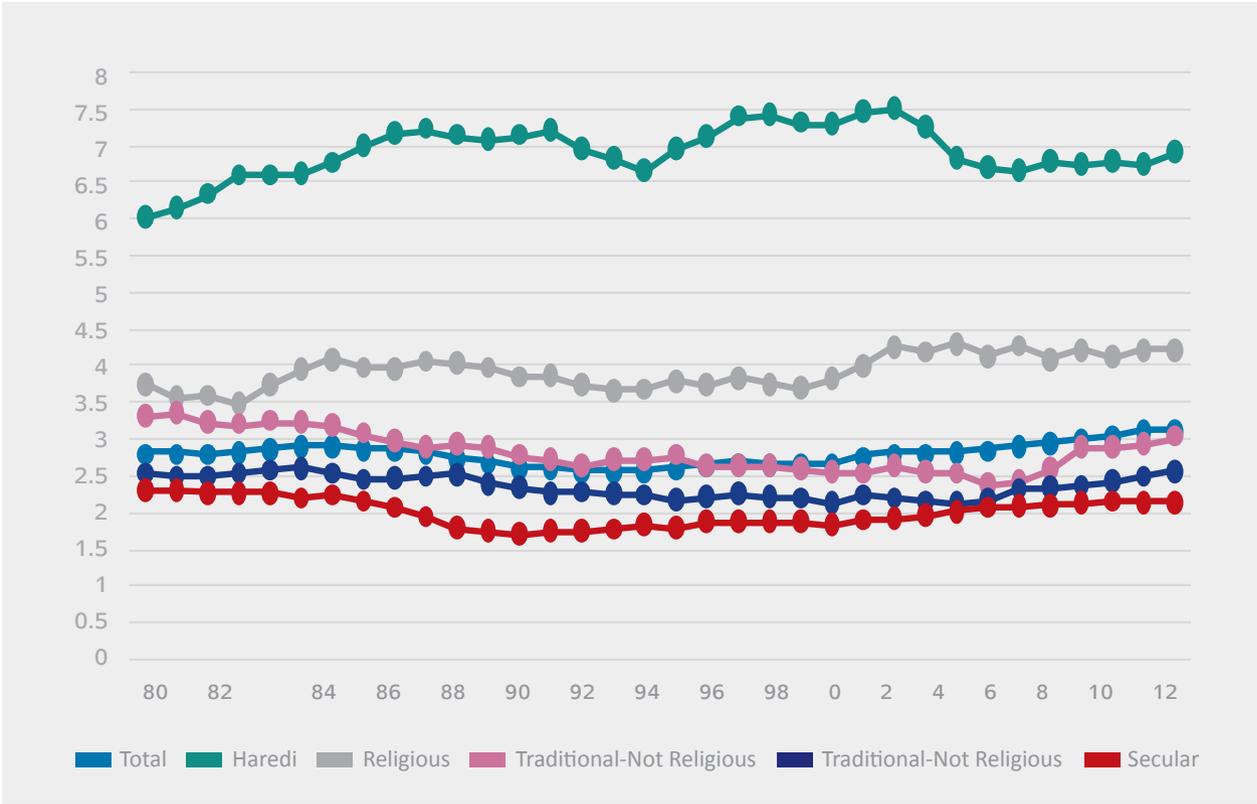
The large number of FSU immigrants, on the one hand, and their low level of fertility on the other, affected the average Jewish fertility, which reached an all time low point of 2.6 children in the last decade of the 20th century. The recently observed slight increase in fertility among Israeli women of Soviet background, along with the increased share of the religious and Haredi sub-groups, explain the addition of half a child to the total fertility rate of Israeli Jews, which stood at 3.1 at the beginning of 2015. Thus, over time, there have been fluctuations in the average number of children per Jewish woman as a result of large waves of immigration and different fertility patterns according to areas of origin; processes of convergence to similar patterns after settling in Israel and especially among their offspring; and compositional changes of the Israeli Jewish population resulting from an increase in the proportion of people with a strong religious orientation. After all these ups and downs, the fertility level of Israeli Jews today is similar to the level when the state was founded.

As suggested, the Jewish fertility level has recently been on the rise. No less important is the fact that it stands above replacement level (2.1 children per woman). This means that Jewish natural movement is positive in Israel, and that young age groups are larger than older age groups, hence population growth. This differentiates the Israeli Jewish population from other Western societies

in Europe and North America where fertility levels are at the replacement threshold or below it. Likewise, the fertility level of all Jewish sub-groups in Israel is higher than the average fertility level in Diaspora communities.

Level of fertility varies by religiosity (Figure 3.2). In 2012-14 the average number of children for Haredi woman was 6.9, 4.2 for religious woman, 3 for traditional-religious, 2.6 for traditional-not very religious, and 2.1 (replacement level) among secular women. Trends over time suggest some diminishing in Haredi fertility, and a concurrent increase among the other sub-groups (the religious, traditional-religious, traditional-not very religious, and secular). Notably, there have been periods in the past when the fertility of Haredi women had declined but later reversed itself and increased once again. In the past 35 years, Haredi fertility has ranged between a low of 6 children to a high of 7.5 children. The increase in the number of children among secular women reflects a return to the level that characterized this group on the eve of the large influx of immigrants from the FSU in the 1990s. Still, Haredi fertility is three times higher than that of secular women, and fertility among the religious is twice as high as among the secular. Hence, sub-groups within the Israeli Jewish sector have increased at a different pace, which has strengthened the weight of Haredi and religious Jews.

Figure 3.2. Fertility Rates among Jewish Women in Israel, by Religiosity, 1980-2013

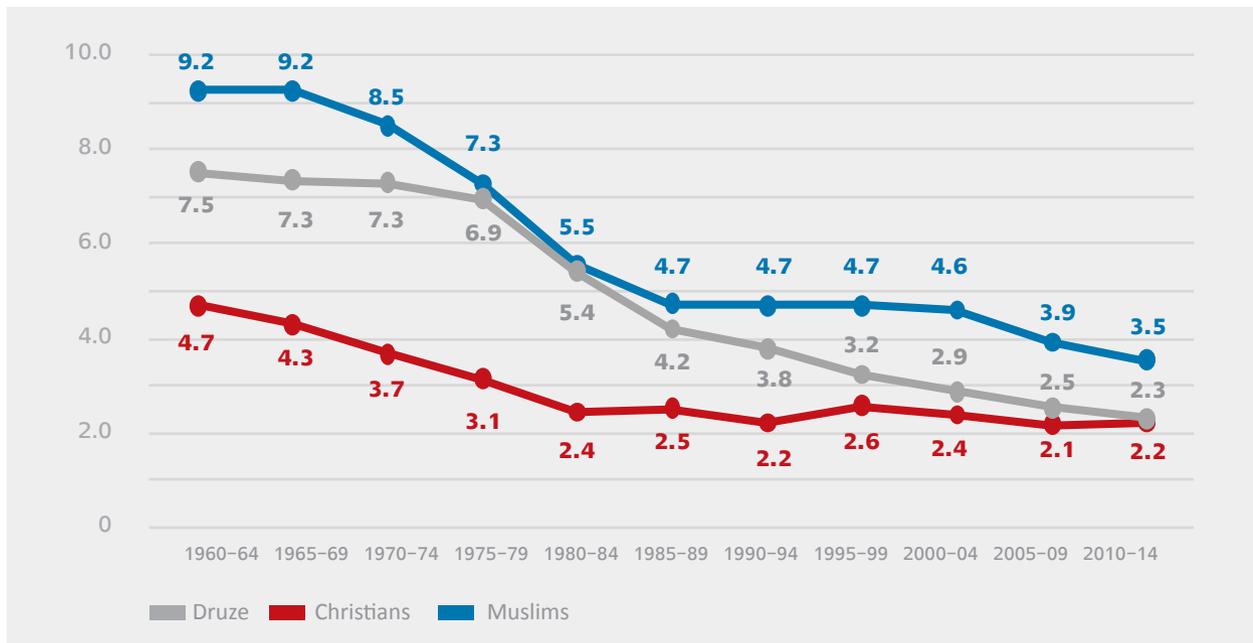


Adopted from: Ahmad Halil, Fertility among Jewish Women in Israel, by Level of Religiosity, 1979-2014. Jerusalem, CBS, Series of Technical Papers.

As Jewish fertility has risen, the fertility of other Israeli groups has diminished (Figure 3.3). This process is especially salient among Muslims: in the early 1960s Muslim women, on average, gave birth to 9 children, by mid-1980s this rate had declined to 5 children, and to less than 3.5 in 2015. Among Druze, fertility has declined from 7.5 children in the first half of the 1960s to 2.2 children today; and among Christians the change was from 4.7 to

2.3 children in the same period. The contradictory trends among Jews and Muslims has totally masked the substantial differentials between the two groups of the past. Yet, because of the past high Muslim fertility, this population has a very young age composition and hence grows faster than the Jewish population. Jewish fertility is higher (by about one child) than that of the Druze or Christians.

Figure 3.3. Total Fertility Rates of Muslims, Christians, and Druze Women in Israel, 1960-2014



Adopted from: CBS, Statistical Abstract of Israel, 2015.

### 3.2 Mortality

While fertility contributes to population increase, mortality exits people out. The balance between births and deaths determines natural movement. The death rates are affected by life expectancy, that is the average number of years a person is expected to live, as well as by the age composition of the population: the older the population the higher its mortality rates. Life expectancy reflects the level of medical services, the quality of the environment, and lifestyles that expose people to illness and risk of death.

Life expectancy differs for men and women. Women live longer than men. Gender differences are partly explained by genetics, and partly by different social, work, and health behaviors. Likewise, in any given country there may be life

expectancy differences along racial, ethnic, or religious lines as well as those related to socio-economic stratification and cultural behaviors.

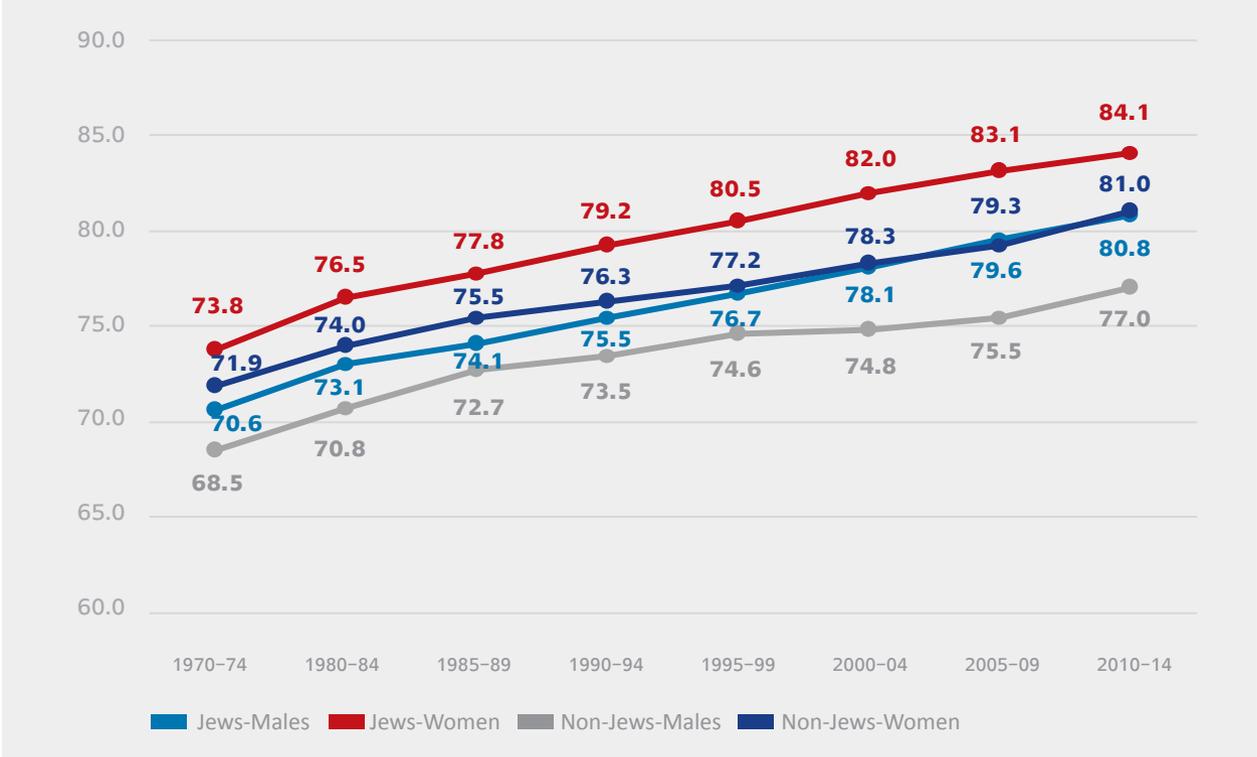
Israel is defined as a developed country and is notable for the longevity of its citizens. Life expectancy is steadily on the rise (Figure 3.4). Since 1970, the life expectancy of Jewish men and women has increased by approximately ten years: from 70.6 to 80.8 years for men, and from 73.8 to 84.1 years for women. Notably, the gender gap has remained fairly unchanged, and is among the lowest in the West.

Life expectancy among non-Jews has also increased: among men - from 68.5 years in the early 1970s to 77 years today, and among women - from 71.9 to 81.0 years in the same period. The pace of increase in life expectancy was faster among Jews

than among non-Jews. Hence, the gaps between the two groups have widened since 1970: among men - from a 2.1 year gap in favor of Jews to 3.8 today; and among women, from 1.9 in 1970 to 3.1 years today. This gap widening between Jews and non-Jews happened despite the fact that in the

1990s a large number of FSU immigrants arrived in Israel with significantly lower life expectancies than the veteran Jewish population. The life expectancy of non-Jewish men and women today is similar to that of their Jewish counterparts some 15 years ago.

**Figure 3.4. Life Expectancy of Israeli Population, by Religion and Gender, 1970-2014**



Adopted from: CBS, Statistical Abstract of Israel, 2015.

**3.3. International Migration**

Since its founding, Israel has absorbed some three million people. Immigration to Israel has not been evenly distributed across the years, rather it has been characterized by a repeating wave-like pattern of periods of high immigrant numbers followed by periods with lower immigrant

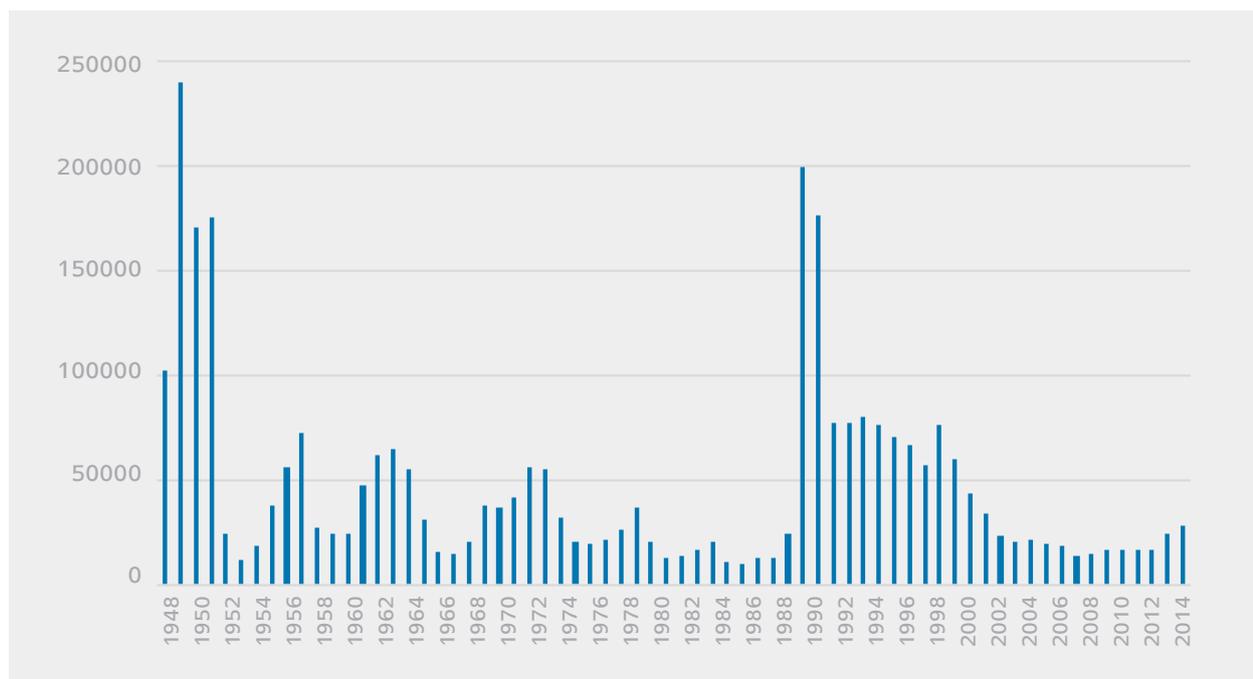
numbers (Figure 3.5). Within these ups and downs, there have been two salient waves: between mid-1948 and the end of 1951 ("mass immigration"), which brought to Israel 687,000 men and women; and the second wave between 1990 and 1994, in which slightly more than 600,000 immigrants settled in Israel. Because of the substantial increase in the size of the Jewish population over the first

40 years of statehood, the relative contribution of each of the waves, despite their similar absolute numbers, is very different: while the first wave doubled the size of the Israeli Jewish population, the second wave increased the Jewish population by 20 percent.

Following the mass immigration immediately after statehood, there were two additional waves, though much smaller, in the mid-1950s and in the first half of the 1960s that mainly brought Jews who had remained in east and central Europe and in North African countries. A relatively large number of immigrants arrived once again between 1968 and 1973; in the main, they were Jews from North America and west Europe motivated by Zionist passion in light of

Israel's victory and the reunification of Jerusalem in the Six-Day War. Some immigrants also arrived at that time from central European Communist satellite states. Later in the 1970s, the Soviet Union allowed a limited number of Jews to emigrate, some of whom settled in Israel. In 1983 and 1991, Israel absorbed two large waves of immigrants from Ethiopia, which brought most of the Jewish community there. After the termination of the large FSU influx in the 1990s, the annual number of immigrants stabilized at the range of 15-25,000 people which includes Jews as well as non-Jewish kin that meet the criteria of the Law of Return. In last two years, the number of immigrants has increased chiefly due to the enhanced flow from France and Ukraine.

**Figure 3.5. Immigration to Israel, 1948-2015**



Adopted from CBS, Statistical Abstract, 2015.

Concurrent with immigration, others, known as *yordim* (descenders), have chosen to leave the country. We do not know the exact number of Israelis who have left permanently. The available data relate to people who left Israel and didn't return after one year abroad. This information can't provide a real picture of the phenomenon of emigration from Israel and might be even misleading. On one hand, Israelis who settled abroad permanently but visit Israel frequently and are therefore no longer counted as emigrants; on the other hand, the data include people who traveled abroad for a relatively long period, for example to study, without visiting Israel but nevertheless intend to return. Notably, some of the emigrants are, in fact, return migrants i.e., Jews who immigrated to Israel and later decided either to return to their home country or move to a third country. Typically, the number of emigrants increases after each wave of new comers.

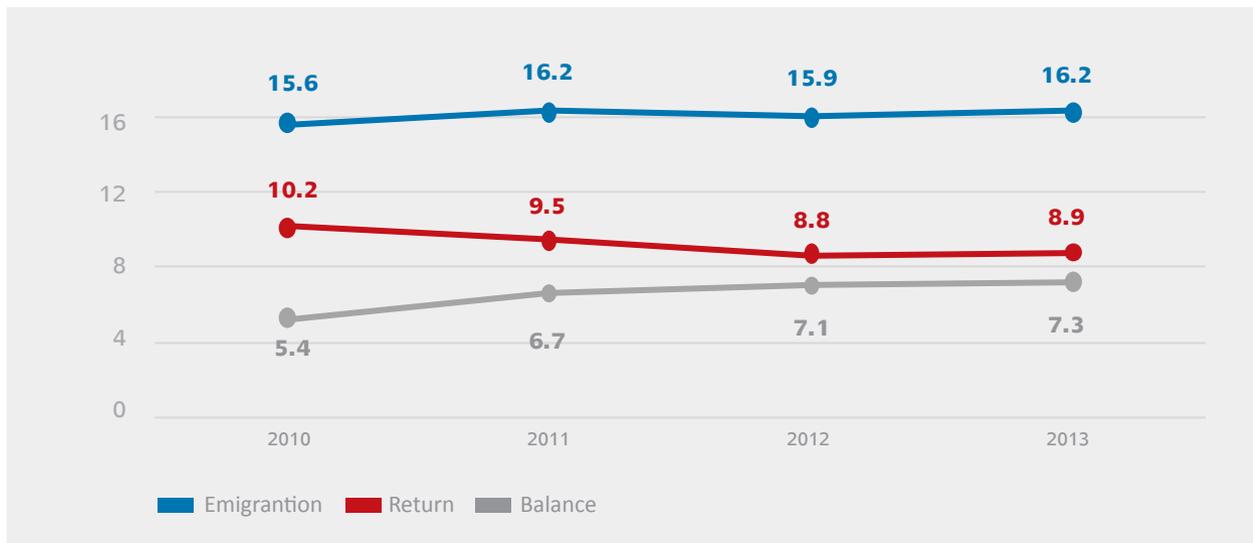
From 1948 to today 674,500 Jewish inhabitants left the country. If we divide this period into intervals of 10 to 12 years each, we see: a large emigration out of the country in the first dozen years of statehood (some 100,000 people); between 1971 and 1982 (133,000 emigrants); and a peak of emigrants between 1983 and 1995 of slightly more than 200,000. It stands to reason that large numbers of emigrants are associated

with unsuccessful absorption of recently arrived immigrants. Also, in the last half of the 1990s through 2008, a substantial number of people (129,000) chose to leave the country, including some who had arrived from the FSU a few years earlier.

In each of the years from 2010 to 2013, approximately 16,000 people emigrated from Israel (Figure 3.6). At the same time, in each of these years, an estimated 10,000 Israelis returned back home. Hence, the negative balance between emigre and returning Israelis (who lived abroad for a continuous period of one year or more) ranges between 5,000 and 7,000 every year. During this period, there was a gradual increase in the negative balance of Israeli migration: a net loss of 5,400 in 2010, 6,700 in 2011, 7,100 in 2012, and 7,300 in 2013 (or an increase of one third between 2010 and 2013). This is a rate of growth in net migration much higher than the rate of increase of the size of the Israeli population.

It is worth noting that 41 percent of the emigrants were between the ages of 20 and 39, and another 32 percent were children. Thus, approximately three-fourths of the emigrants were singles or young families, disrupting the most (re)productive age cohorts and those expected to carry the civic burden of military service (both mandatory and reserve duty).

**Figure 3.6. Emigration, Return Migration, and Migration Balance of Israelis Who Stayed Abroad for a Continuous Period of One Year or More, 2010-2013**



Adopted from CBS, Statistical Abstract, 2015.

## 4. Geographic Dispersal and Mobility

The Israeli government has always regarded population as a tool for spatial planning and settlement. In a country where agricultural workers constitute only a tiny proportion of the labor force, and where the location of industry is often not guided by the location of natural resources, social, economic, and geopolitical considerations, along with environmental concerns, determined the geographic distribution of the population. The state provides meaningful economic incentives in housing, labor, and tax relief to attract people to high priority areas of settlement. These factors, together with individual and familial characteristics, such as educational attainment, economic status, and ideological orientation, shape the patterns of residential

mobility and population distribution.

Israel is a small country. Its size is 21,000 square kilometers. Much of this area is under military control, which precludes residential use. Overall, in 2014, there were 1,211 towns in Israel. This includes 125 Jewish settlements in the West Bank. Nearly 90 percent of Israeli towns are Jewish. They are distributed among six official national districts: Jerusalem, North, Haifa, Tel Aviv, Center, and South; in addition, there are Jewish settlements in the West Bank (and during the period 1967-2005 also in Gaza).

Over the seven decades since statehood, two districts have maintained their share of the population (i.e., their population growth rate was similar to that of the national scene): Jerusalem, whose Jewish population ranged between 10 and 12 percent of the total Israeli Jewish population,

and the North district whose population accounted for between 8 and 10 percent of the total (Figure 4.1). Two districts, Haifa and Tel Aviv, experienced a diminution of approximately half their share of the total population: Haifa district from 21 percent in 1948 to 11 percent at the beginning of 2015; and Tel Aviv from 43 to 20 percent, respectively.

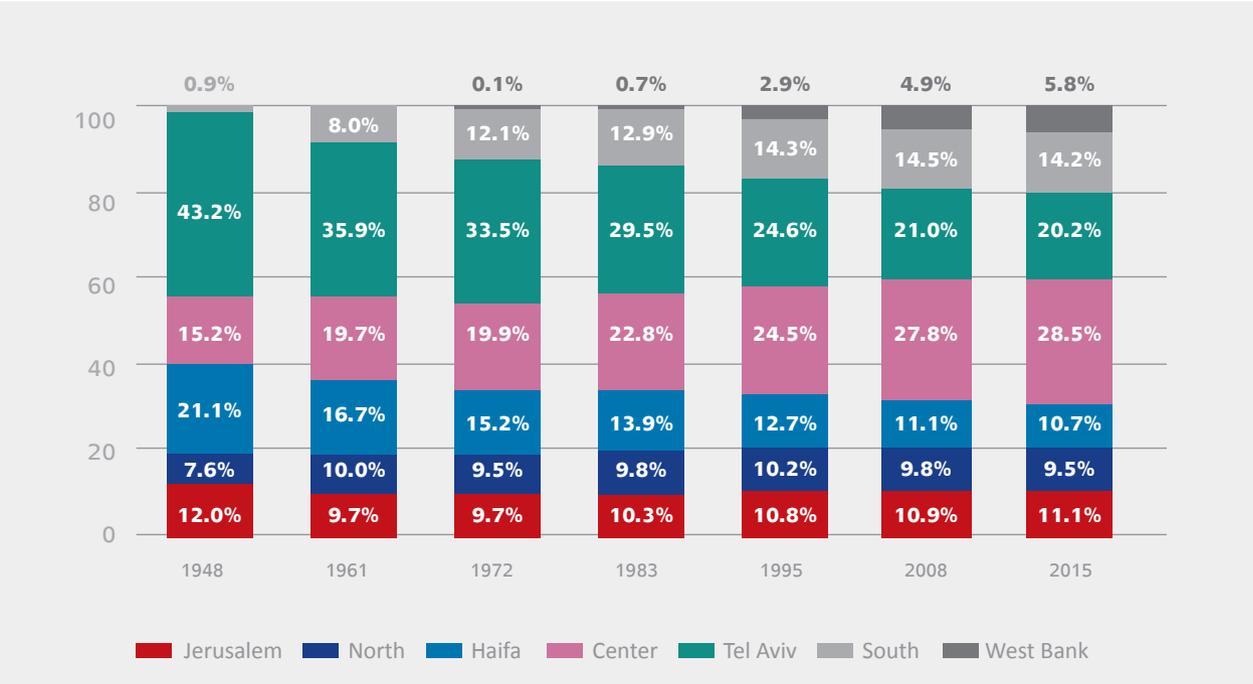
Over time, the Jewish population has concentrated more and more in the Central district, the South, and the West Bank. The increase in the share of the Southern area lasted until the mid-1990s. The next several years will bear out whether and to what extent the intense development of the Negev, especially the relocation of large military bases there from the center of the country, will be

accompanied by population movement which can strengthen the South district vis-à-vis other parts of the country. The West Bank today is home for nearly 6 percent of Israel's Jewish population.

For the sake of illustration, we merged into one geographic unit all the areas that were annexed to Israel following the Six-Day War, as well as the Jewish settlements in the West Bank. For this exercise we subtracted the Jewish population of the Golan Heights from the North district, and Jews who reside in the neighborhoods of East Jerusalem from Jerusalem district. In 2015, the Jews in the Golan Heights, East Jerusalem, and the West Bank together account for 9.3 percent of the total Israeli Jewish population.

For each district separately, figure 4.2 presents

**Figure 4.1. The Geographic Distribution of Israeli Jewish Population, by Districts, 1948-2015**

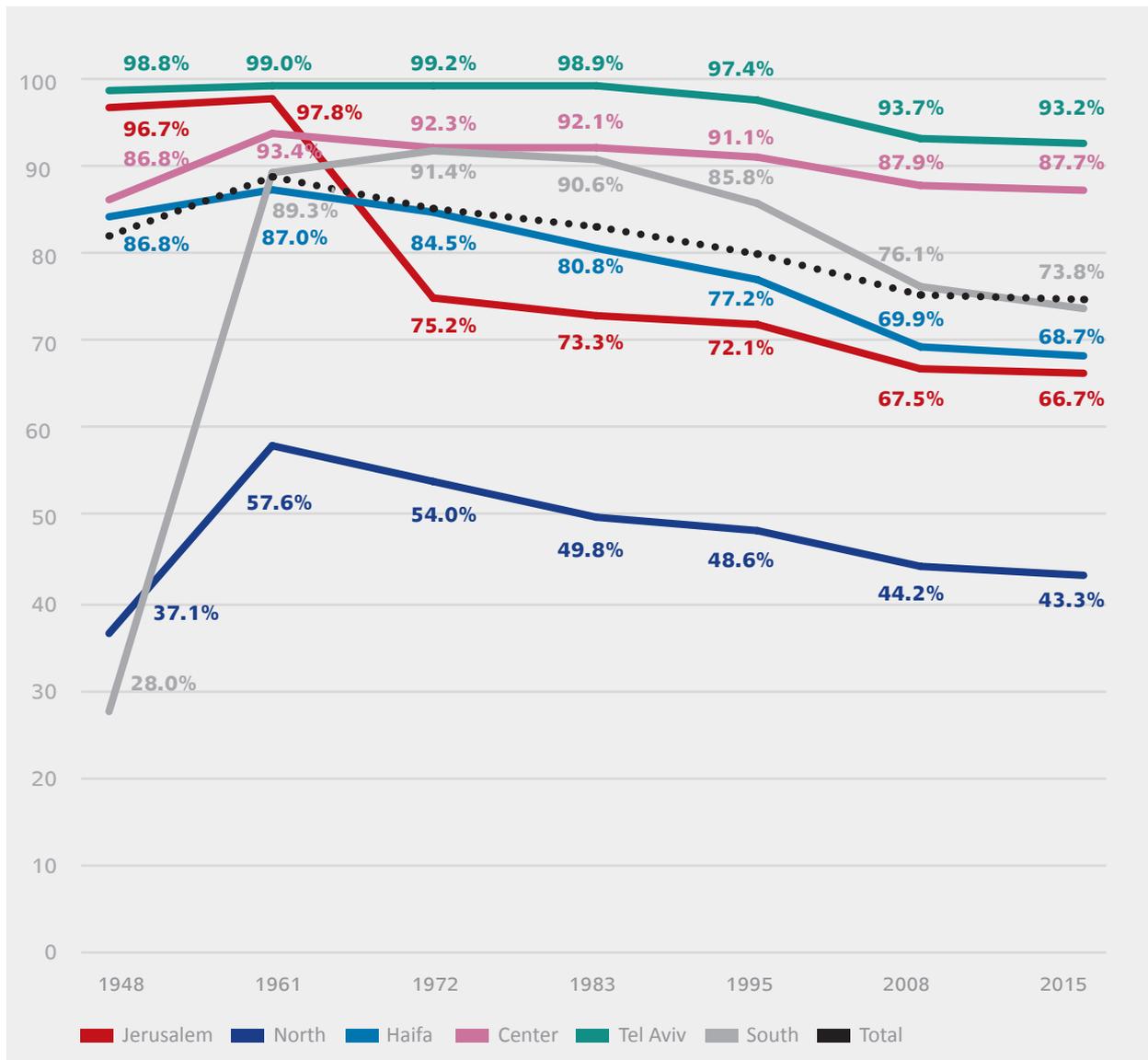


Adopted from CBS, Statistical Abstracts, selected years.

the ratio between the Jewish population and the non-Jewish population, and how this balance has changed over time. In all districts, the share of Jews has diminished and that of non-Jews increased. In 1948, almost the entire population of Jerusalem

district (98 percent) were Jews. Following the unification of the city in 1967 a large number of non-Jews were annexed to the city and, at once, the proportion of Jews declined to three-fourths of the local population and further to two-thirds

Figure 4.2. Percentage of Jews by District of Residence, 1948-2015



Adopted from CBS, Statistical Abstracts, selected years.

today. The North district, which had a slight surplus of Jews following the mass immigration to Israel, is characterized today by a non-Jewish majority. The Haifa district has experienced a decline in the share of Jews: from 85 percent in 1948 to only slightly more than two-thirds today. Two districts – Tel Aviv and Center, kept the Jewish/non-Jewish equilibrium fairly stable with a clear majority of the former (around 90 percent). Also, in the South, the 1961 robust 89 percent Jewish majority has declined to less than two-thirds today.

Overall, in each of the three districts, Jerusalem, North and Haifa, the proportion of Jews is lower than their share in the national population (three-fourth); in one district, the South, the share of Jews resembles their proportion of the total national population, and in Tel Aviv and Central district there is a higher concentration of Jews relative to their share of the overall Israeli population.

The size of the Jewish population in each district, and their proportion of the total local population, is determined, among other things, by in- and out-migration (internal migration balance). A positive balance is evidence of strong holding factors for veteran inhabitants and pull factors for newcomers; a negative balance indicates push factors that drive people away and dissuade newcomers. Spatial mobility is a widespread phenomenon in Israel. In every year between 2010 and 2014, some 15 thousand people moved from one district to another (including the West Bank).

These internal movements have resulted in population gains in two major areas: Center district

(a surplus of some 50 thousand in-migrants over out-migrants), and Jewish settlements in the West Bank (a gain of some 16 thousand people). The rest of the districts have experienced declining Jewish populations: Jerusalem and Tel Aviv have lost a rather similar number of inhabitants – 29 and 25 thousand respectively; and the two peripheral districts, South and North – approximately 11 and 4 thousand, respectively.

The migration balance of each district has changed slightly over time, fluctuating between high balance (positive or negative) years and years of diminished balance, and so forth. These observations show the tendency of the Israeli Jewish public to prefer the Center district over the North, South and Jerusalem; and to settle in the West Bank. Although we do not have information on the characteristics of the migrants, it stands to reason that the Center has gained mainly secular and traditional inhabitants, while the West Bank migrants have tended to be religious or even Ultra-Orthodox.<sup>2</sup> On one hand, the movement of specific Jewish sub-groups to the Center, and different sub-groups to the West Bank on the other, has resulted in spatial separation, namely physical distance of groups one from another.

## 5. Educational Attainment

Figure 5.1 shows the population distribution by three levels of education: up to 12 years of studies with matriculation; 13-15 years; and 16 or more. The findings clearly attest to a significant improvement in the level of education over time. Among Jews, only 17.7 percent had some

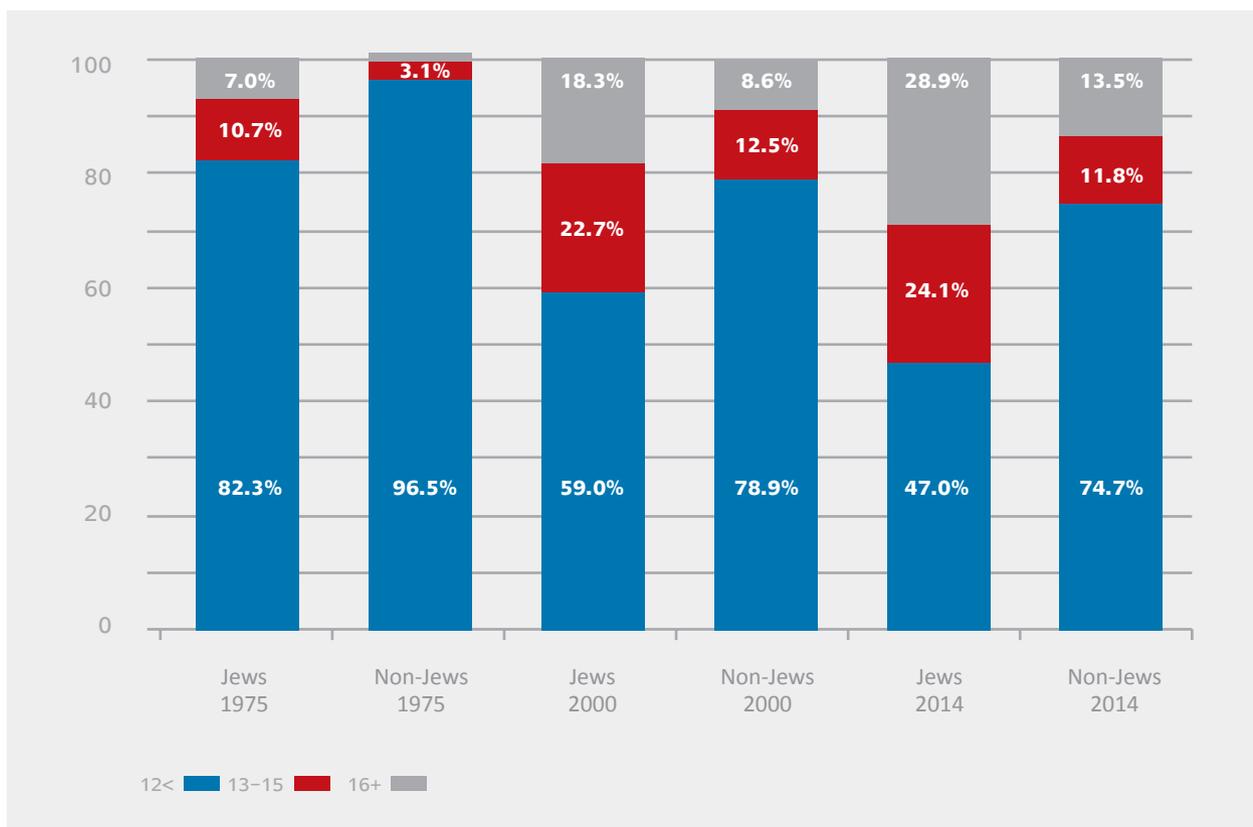
post-secondary education in 1975, by 2000 it had increased to 41 percent, and the figure is as high as 53 percent today. In other words, every second adult Jew in Israel today has some post-high school education. If we look at those with 16 years of education or more, an academic degree, the increase was from 7 percent in 1975 to 28.9 percent today, a fourfold increase.

The non-Jewish population has also experienced an increase in post-secondary education: from 3.5 percent in 1975 to 21.1 percent in 2000, and to 25.3 percent today. The proportion of non-Jews

with 16 years of education or more increased from 1 to 12 percent during this period.

Improvement in educational attainment was faster among Jews than non-Jews. This has resulted in widening gaps between the two groups. The index of dissimilarity, which pertains to the proportion of non-Jews who need to raise their level of education so that their educational profile resembles that of the Jewish population, increased from 11 percent in 1975 to 20 percent in 2000, and is 28 percent today.

**Figure 5.1 Level of Education among Jews and Non-Jews in Israel, 1975-2014**



Adopted from CBS, Statistical Abstracts, selected years.

## 6. Population Projections

What is the anticipated demographic evolution of the Israeli population over the next two decades? We make use of the Central Bureau of Statistics population projections to answer this question. It must be noted that projection is not prophecy; rather, population projections are a mathematical exercise that takes into account the size of the population (by age cohort and sex) at a given starting point and factors in the demographic components of fertility, mortality, and international migration to calculate the increase or decrease of people for the projection period. It is common to utilize alternative scenarios regarding the components of demographic change (low, medium, high). In CBS projections, each scenario

includes different assumptions regarding fertility and international migration; the level of mortality is similar for all scenarios. Below we present the medium projection.

This scenario postulates that the population of the Israel, 8.3 million in 2015, will grow to almost 10 million (9.8) by 2025, and to 11.4 million in 2035. In terms of percentages, in the first decade of the projection the population is expected to increase by 19 percent, and by an expected 16 percent in the second decade.

The non-Jewish population is expected to increase more rapidly than the Jewish population. Hence, the share of Jews (including those of "no religion") is likely to decline by one percent every decade, i.e., from 79 percent in 2015 to 77 percent in 2035.

**Table 6.1. Population Projection for Israel, 2015-2035 (In percentages) (Medium Scenario)**

	2015	2025	2035
Total: Thousand	8,296.9	9,844.9	11,395.6
Percentage	100.0	100.0	100.0
Thereof: Jews (and with no religion)	78.9	78.0	77.1
Non-Jews	21.1	22.0	22.9

## 7. The Population of Jerusalem

We devote a separate section to an in-depth discussion on the population of Jerusalem. At the outset, it should be noted that in the past seven decades, Jerusalem's borders and the placement of physical barriers within the city have changed a number of times. According to the UNSCOP Partition Plan (UN Resolution 181,

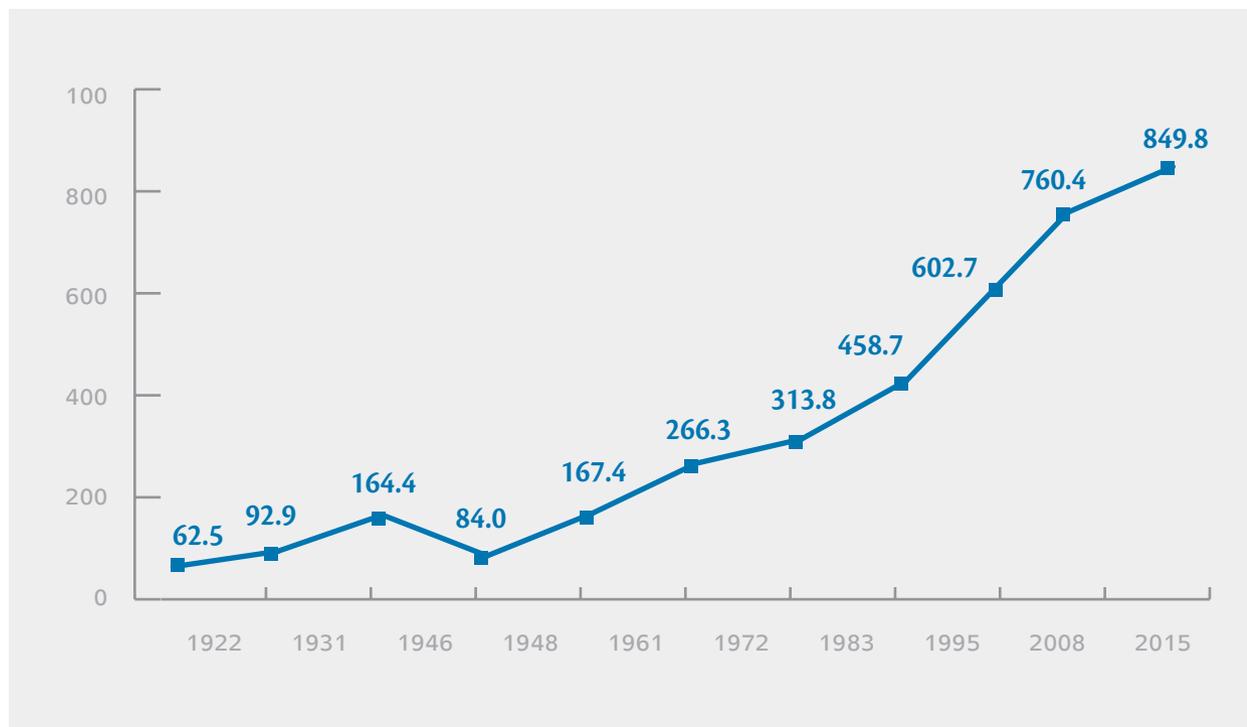
November 29, 1947), Jerusalem was to be a neutral status territory (*corpus separatum*) under UN supervision. After the War of Independence, the city was divided: its western sector under Israeli control, its eastern part controlled by Jordan. Following the Six-Day War, the two parts were unified, and a number of villages not previously part of Jordanian East Jerusalem were added. However, when the separation barrier was built

in the previous decade, a number of Arab villages were left to its east.

On the eve of the state's founding, in 1946, Jerusalem was home to 164,000 residents (Figure 7.1). Following the city's division in 1948, roughly half remained on the western side (84,000). The Israeli census of 1961 recorded a doubling of residents to 167,000. Following the 1967

reunification of Jerusalem, the number of citizens stood at slightly more than a quarter million. It continued to grow as a result of internal demographic trends and the settlement of new immigrants: it reached 428,000 in 1983, and 750,000 in 2008. Jerusalem's population today is 850,000 – Israel's largest city.

**Figure 7.1. Population of Jerusalem, 1922-2015 (in thousands)**



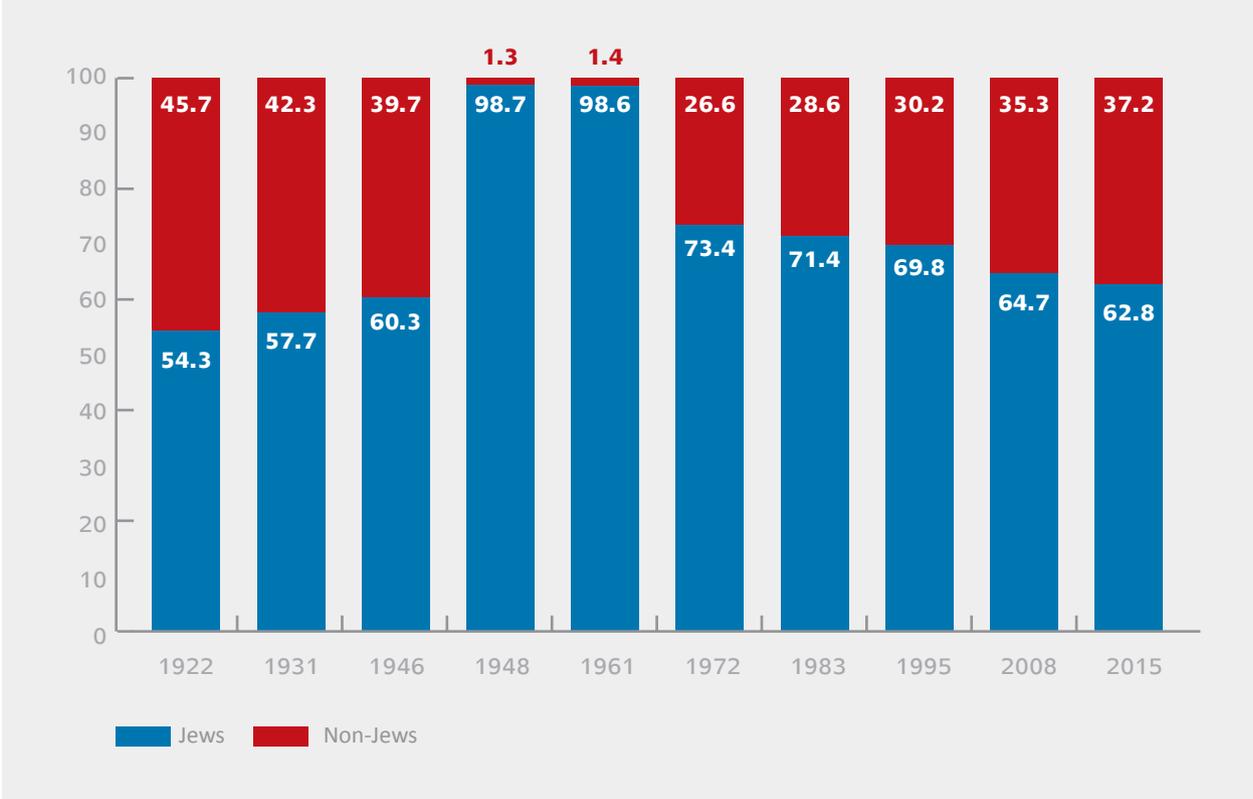
Until 1946: in the British Mandate borders; since the establishment of the state and until the Six-Day's War: 1948 borders; following the Six Day War: the borders of a united Jerusalem.

Source: The Jerusalem Center for Israel Studies, Statistical Yearbook, 2015.

As the number of residents has shifted, so too has the balance between Jews and non-Jews (Figure 7.2). In the latter part of the British Mandate, Jews constituted 60 percent of the city's population. After the city was divided, the western part remained primarily Jewish. The Jewish majority of Jerusalem (western, of course) was more substantial than in the rest of the country – 99 percent of Jerusalem versus 85 percent of

the entire country. With the reunification of Jerusalem, the non-Jewish residents of the eastern sector were added, and all at once the proportion of Jews was reduced to three-quarters. Since then, the growth of the non-Jewish population has been more rapid than that of the Jewish population. At the beginning of 2015, Jerusalem's Jews constituted 62.8 percent of the city's population, a proportion lower than that of Jews in all of Israel.

**Figure 7.2. Jerusalem's Population according to Population Groups, 1922-2015 (Percentages)**



The balance between Jews and non-Jews differs in each part of the city. While in the western part, almost all the residents are Jewish, in the eastern part, Jews constitute 40 percent. However, in absolute terms, in the Jewish neighborhoods in the eastern part of the city and the old city, there are 200,000 Jews altogether.

Analysis of the five-year period between 2009 and 2013 shows that the growth of Jerusalem's Jewish population was due to natural growth, the settling of new immigrants, an internal migration balance with other cities and towns, and a balance between expat Israelis and those who returned (Table 7.1). Although the natural movement and settling of immigrants increased the number of Jews in the city, the internal balance of migration was negative, by approximately 37,000 people. (Some moved to secular Jewish cities near Jerusalem, such as Mevaseret Zion or to further away places, such as Tel Aviv. Others left Jerusalem for Haredi settlements or the ultra-Orthodox neighborhoods of Beit Shemesh, Modi'in Illit, and

Beitar Illit, and some went to non-Haredi West Bank settlements.) The loss of residents from internal migration canceled out half the increase of the Jewish population from natural growth and Aliyah. The balance between new immigrants and the number of Jerusalem residents leaving Israel is also negative. Among non-Jews, natural growth and family unification account for a population rise, while internal migration brings it down slightly. All told, 31,000 were added to the Jewish population in the past five years, and 40,000 to the non-Jewish population, which means that Jerusalem's Jewish population grew at a slower pace than its non-Jewish population.

In each of the years between 2009 and 2013, non-Jewish population growth outstripped Jewish growth by a percentage point or two. Despite this, new data published on Jerusalem Day by the Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies show that in 2014, the growth rate of the Jewish population increased considerably and was close to that of the non-Jewish population. In other words, as

**Table 7.1. Components of Jewish and Non-Jewish Population Growth in Jerusalem, 2009-2013.**

Population Groups	Natural Growth	Immigrants	Internal migration	International Balance of Israeli immigration/ Family Unification	Total Growth
Jews	57.6	15.3	-37.2	-4.7	31.0
Non-Jews	36.7	0	-1.3	4.5	39.9

opposed to previous years when the non-Jewish population grew at a much higher rate than the Jewish one, in 2014 the two demographics grew at a more similar rate. Each of the three factors mentioned had an effect on this: a rise in the Jewish population's natural growth rates (mostly among its Haredi population), a reduction in the Jewish population's negative internal migration balance, and an increased number of new immigrants choosing to live in Jerusalem.

However, the proportion of Jews in Jerusalem is on a consistently downward trajectory. At this time, it is difficult to determine if the new data showing a narrowing growth rate gap between Jews and non-Jews signals a long-term development that will stabilize the balance between the two groups at the current level, or whether it represents a temporary change only, and, in the coming years, the non-Jewish growth rate will once again be greater than the Jewish one. In the second instance, it is even possible that the Jewish population will cease to be a majority in the city, perhaps by mid-century.

## **8. Discussion and Policy Implications**

Over the course of 68 years of statehood, Israel has experienced far reaching demographic trends. The size and composition of the Israeli population changed unrecognizably. This reflects different demographic patterns among its major sub-groups. Demography should be viewed a paramount factor in planning and policy making that seeks to maintain the Jewish and democratic character of the country, in which the Jewish

people materializes its right for self-determination as well as for keeping the country's social and economic strength.

We believe the following ten observations are pivotal for understanding Israeli demography. Each of them has a practical implication. Of course, every intervention, whether governmental or otherwise, should carefully guaranty equality between groups and adhere to international principles of human rights. We suggest that informed policy be implemented by means of negotiation and careful attention to the needs of the groups at stake.

### **1) Population Size and Composition**

The number of Israeli inhabitants is steadily on the rise. The pace of growth is mainly affected by trends in immigration to Israel and changes in fertility patterns. In the midst of these processes the equilibrium between the two major components of the population, Jews and non-Jews, has remained fairly stable. We consider individuals of "no religion," namely immigrants who are not Halachically Jewish but were granted the right to settle in Israel under the Law of Return, as belonging to the Jewish population. Ways should be found to officially incorporate them into the Jewish group, chiefly through easing the conversion process.

### **2) Fertility**

The fertility level of Israeli Jews is high in comparison to other developed countries. Substantial differences exist between ultra-Orthodox, religious, and secular Jews. Because

of the low number of children among secular women, and in light of recent empirical evidence that the intended number of children by secular woman is higher by one child than the actual level<sup>3</sup>, we suggest exploring ways to encourage greater fertility among this group. Fertility level among Muslim women has diminished over time, and has pretty much converged with that of Jewish women; this is a major dimension of successful social integration of Arabs into the Israeli society.

### **3) Life Expectancy**

The life expectancy of Israelis is growing. Jews, men and women alike, live longer than their respective non-Jewish counterparts. Life expectancy gaps between Jews and non-Jews have widened slightly over time. The life expectancy of non-Jews resembles that of Jews 15 years back. Attempts should be made to find the reasons for these variations and develop policies to gradually reduce these gaps. Such policies are likely to improve the quality of life of the non-Jewish inhabitants and strengthen their feeling of being equal citizens of the state.

### **4) Immigration**

The overwhelming majority of Diaspora Jewry today resides in developed and democratic countries. Overall, they are not exposed to any political, economic, or social oppression that might push them to leave their home countries and settle elsewhere. Yet, occasionally, different areas undergo political unrest or a shaking of the personal safety of their inhabitants, Jews included. Recently, this has been salient in Ukraine and France as well as in Turkey (although the number of Jews there is small). Agencies responsible for immigration to

Israel should prepare for such opportunities by examining the needs and expectations of potential immigrants, and directing appropriate resources to encourage immigration and ensure successful absorption in Israel.

### **5) Emigration**

Although the number of Jews who leave the country is small, it is somewhat on the rise. We know from earlier studies that many of those who depart have the high human capital that comes with education and occupations in advanced technology and research. Recently, Israelis abroad have been making efforts to establish organizations and institutionalize their connection to Israel. The State of Israel should do more to assist young people in finding jobs that suit their professional qualifications, lower housing prices for young families, and diminish inter-group tensions in order to keep young Israelis in the country. Concurrently, the government should maintain ties with Israelis abroad and nurture their commitment to Israel.

### **6) Spatial Distribution**

The spatial distribution of the Israeli population does not reveal special concerns. Major alterations in recent years have taken place in the core area of the country, namely the declining weight of Tel Aviv in favor of the Central district. To a large extent, the North and South districts, as well as Jerusalem, have maintained their share of the Jewish population. Yet, spatial planning should direct attention toward how to attract more Jews to the North, which is the only district that does not have a Jewish majority.

## 7) Education

The educational attainment of the Israeli population is gradually improving. This is true for Jews and non-Jews alike. However, the pace of growth is faster among the former, hence gaps between the two groups are widening. More resources should be allocated to raising the educational level in the non-Jewish sector, including the rate of those attaining matriculation diplomas, which enable them to study in universities and colleges.

## 8) Projection

The Israeli population is expected to continue to increase over the next two decades. The non-Jewish population will grow slightly faster than the Jewish population. However, this will not cause a substantial change in the balance between the two groups. Attempts to enhance immigration to Israel and diminish emigration out from Israel will complement each other and strengthen the Jewish component of the population.

## 9) Jerusalem

In the public debate, some claim geography is more important than demography, and that one should not interfere in processes underway within the city's population, even at the price of losing a Jewish majority. Related to this, one should keep in mind that East Jerusalem's Arabs can vote and run for city council seats as well as the mayorship. Until now, most have not chosen to exercise this right, but a change in approach, or a decision by the Palestinian leadership to participate in municipal elections, could bring a change to the face of the city council or even the mayor's office.

Others, who wish to ensure and strengthen Jerusalem's Jewish majority can examine two policy measures in different but complementary directions.

a) The first is to implement measures to reinforce or accelerate the trend narrowing the negative balance of internal migration, such as job creation and the availability of affordable housing – especially for younger graduates of the city's academic institutions (in the spirit of the recent June 2, 2016 government decision on the occasion of Jerusalem Day). Related to this, the government should take steps to raise and ensure the quality of life for non-Jewish citizens, especially in East Jerusalem. Non-Jewish Jerusalemites must be better integrated into the city's social, economic, and cultural fabric to ensure peace and quiet. Conditions such as these will retain more residents in the city and raise the appeal of Jerusalem to new populations.

To ensure that these changes help reduce the rate of out-migration from Jerusalem and increase the number of new residents, we recommend strengthening the image of Jerusalem as a safe, developing, pleasant and special place to live.

b) A different policy measure could be changing the municipal borders of Jerusalem either westward or eastward, without altering Israel's sovereign status over these areas. Shifting the border westward by annexing existing Jewish towns; or shrinking the current municipal boundaries, for example along the current route of the security barrier, perhaps even moving it in order to shift a number of Arab neighborhoods and villages to its eastern side.

Of course any unilateral step that would remove tens of thousands of Arab residents from the municipal boundaries of Jerusalem would need to be well conceived and implemented in a cautious manner to safeguard employment status, welfare rights, and the ability to maintain connections with relatives who will continue to reside within Jerusalem proper. Moreover, moves such as these must be cognizant of relevant political and security considerations.

### 10) Jerusalem and Diaspora Jewry

It is also important to take into account the viewpoint of Diaspora Jewry, much of which supports a united Jerusalem and would likely favor a Jewish-majority Jerusalem. While Diaspora Jewry holds little connection to the neighborhoods on the eastern side of the security fence, they see this physical barrier and its implications on the daily life and living conditions of the Arab residents, as something that does not sit well with their often-liberal views. A policy that would strengthen the Jewish majority of Jerusalem while improving the life of the non-Jewish population could receive greater support from world Jewry, and could even help strengthen its identification with Israel.

In recent years, we have witnessed meaningful changes in the cultural and leisure life of the city. The public spaces of Jerusalem have become more accessible and appropriate to a young population, and for families with children from all sectors, including the secular. This is praiseworthy and should continue.

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In sum, judged by different complementary measures, we assess that Israeli demography is developing in positive directions. Still, several areas require interventions that will strengthen the Jewish character of the country in general and its capital city in particular. Equality between Jews and non-Jews should be enhanced. We believe that the targets presented above and the proposed means to achieve them could be embraced by the overwhelming majority of Israel's citizenry.

## Endnotes

- 1 Beside these Jews there are in the United States another million people who self-define themselves "partly Jewish"; as well as some 350,000 people in Israel of "no religion" who are immigrants and their descendants who met the criteria of the Law of Return but are not halachical Jewish and, at the same time, are not affiliated with any other religion.
- 2 Notably, there are attempts to attract religious population to the Center (such as religious nuclei). At the same time, various estimates suggest that about one-third of the Jews in the West Bank are secular.
- 3 Sergio DellaPergola. 2009. "Actual, Intended, and Appropriate Family Size among Jews in Israel". *Contemporary Jewry* 29: 127-152.