

THE JEWISH PEOPLE POLICY INSTITUTE  
המכון למדיניות העם היהודי

Annual Assessment  
The Situation  
and Dynamics  
of the Jewish  
People 5782 | 2022

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# Annual Assessment The Situation and Dynamics of the Jewish People 5782 | 2022

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## Foreword

The Jewish People Policy Institute's *Annual Assessment of the Situation and Dynamics of the Jewish People* undertakes, each year, to determine whether the past year's developments have affected Israel and the Jewish world positively or negatively. The *Assessment* summary submitted to the Government of Israel is a vital resource for the country's decision makers – a condensed, policy-oriented overview of trends and recommendations in five different dimensions of Jewish well-being: geopolitics, community bonds, resources, identity and identification, and demography.

A year ago, the Jewish people had to contend with its own specific challenges while participating in a worldwide effort to address the sudden and severe crisis precipitated by the coronavirus pandemic. This year, although that crisis still hovers in

the background, the spotlight has shifted to another dramatic development – a war raging in Europe that threatens global stability and the current world order. Not coincidentally, this year's summary for the government also includes a brief section on the status of Ukrainian Jewry. There is a triple irony of history. There are 10,000 Holocaust survivors in Ukraine among the more than 100,000 Jews. They survived in their youth by hiding or fleeing from the Nazis, many to Russia. Now in their older age they must hide and flee again, this time more than 70 years later, and now from Russian aggression. And they are seeking refuge in Germany, which had been the epicenter of the Holocaust and to Poland, where the Nazis carried out their greatest genocide.

The war has forced the Jewish world to engage with a number of issues, some of

them urgent. Israel and the Diaspora Jewish communities have mobilized to provide humanitarian aid and to absorb immigrants and refugees. Organizations like the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee and the Jewish Claims Conference have organized remarkable ambulance convoys to get homebound survivors to safety. Israel has provided mobile hospitals and medical assistance to Ukrainians, Jewish and non-Jewish alike. However, Israel has also had to tread a fine line between its desire to help a beleaguered Ukraine and its need to maintain stable relations with Russia, whose military presence in Syria – especially its extensive air defenses – gives Russia leverage against Israel. Indeed, Russia could dramatically raise the costs to Israel of carrying out air operations to blunt the Iranian effort in and through Syria to transfer advanced weapons, including precision guidance for missiles, to Hezbollah. Presently, Russia generally permits Israel freedom of action in Syria but could change that posture and Israel must manage that reality. The discussion of Russia, Syria, and Iran highlights Israel's need to balance its interests and its moral responsibilities. In this year's assessment, the broader balance of issues pertaining to the Jewish people's interests and moral mission are interlaced with the discussion of trends and recommendations appearing in this report.

These new challenges have not, of course, eliminated old ones. Antisemitism in

countries around the world, on both the left and the right, continues to erode Jewish security; young people say they are "lowering their profile" in order to avoid confrontation with radical antisemitic and anti-Israel elements. Jews in vulnerable areas in France are being relocated to safer residences by the French Jewish community, CRIF. American college campuses remain hotbeds of anti-Israel, anti-Zionist activity, putting Jewish students on the defensive and in need of positive answers to combat misinformation about Israel.

Israel's security concerns about the Iranian nuclear threat have not disappeared; as of this writing, it remains unclear whether there will be a revival of the Iran nuclear deal, the JCPOA, and if so, how much time will it buy? Israel and the United States share the objective of preventing Iran from ever acquiring or developing a nuclear weapon but have different views on what it will take to ensure that. While the current Israeli government is seeking to work closely with the Biden administration on Iran, it has also made clear it will not be bound by the JCPOA if it is revived. Iran, as well as the Palestinian issue in an era when little progress is possible on it, pose difficulties for navigating Israeli policy in Washington. The Israeli government has indicated an interest in helping the economic circumstances and living standards of both Israeli Arabs and Palestinians, but efforts have been halting and not up to the challenge.

There is also some good news in the report. Israel's economic situation is stable, and the resources available to the Jewish people are substantial. We recommend that some of those resources be allocated to strengthening Jewish education in the Diaspora. Another positive development of the past year is that Israel has continued to improve and strengthen its relations with several of its Arab neighbors.

The Abraham Accords, signed in September 2020, have been highly successful in a short period of time. After more than 40 years of peace, trade between Israel and Egypt in 2021 was only \$300 million, with little Israeli tourism to Egypt. By contrast, in a short period of time, trade between Israel and the UAE in 2021, the first full year of the Accords, was over \$1 billion, and is expected to reach over \$2 billion in 2022. And even with COVID restrictions, 250,000 Israelis have visited the UAE, which has opened two new synagogues and hosted an Israeli pavilion at its world expo. There is room for much greater trade and investment, to the mutual benefit of both countries.

Moreover, the government coalition that formed with the participation of Jews and Arabs, though it has not solved the complex problems in the relations between these groups, has nevertheless highlighted the potential for cooperation that could produce a better future for Israel's Jewish and Arab communities alike.

This year, in the framework of its policy recommendations, JPPI emphasizes the challenge of absorbing the diverse wave of immigration arriving from Ukraine and Russia, with its cultural and social implications; decision makers are again called upon to carefully examine means of addressing the Haredi sector's rapid growth and its social, economic, and cultural ramifications; the problem of global antisemitism demands significant attention on the part of the Israeli government, which must plan its response in a systematic way at the highest echelons; and, of special importance, Israel must use its resources and creative powers to narrow the gaps between different groups and sectors, and to achieve maximal cohesion, both internally and among the Jewish people as a whole.

The challenges are great, and the lack of governmental stability still casts its pall, making it hard to cope with the challenges and to formulate long-term plans for their resolution. But it is clear that, given current circumstances, Israel cannot wait until the political situation changes, or until the electorate makes an unequivocal decision. Israel must act, and if the governmental baton once again passes, we hope that those who come after will take action in their turn.

**Stuart E. Eizenstat and Dennis Ross**



## Main Recommendations to the Government of Israel

Dialogue with Jews who support the Democratic Party must be deepened in order to harness their support and assistance in advancing Israel's positions on the Iran nuclear issue (details on page 16)

Diaspora communities (with the assistance of Israel) should prioritize significant Jewish education projects – financially, socially, and institutionally (details on page 20)

Philanthropy in Israel, by both individuals and institutions, should be encouraged, emphasizing the Jewish value of giving as is customary in Diaspora communities worldwide (details on page 21)

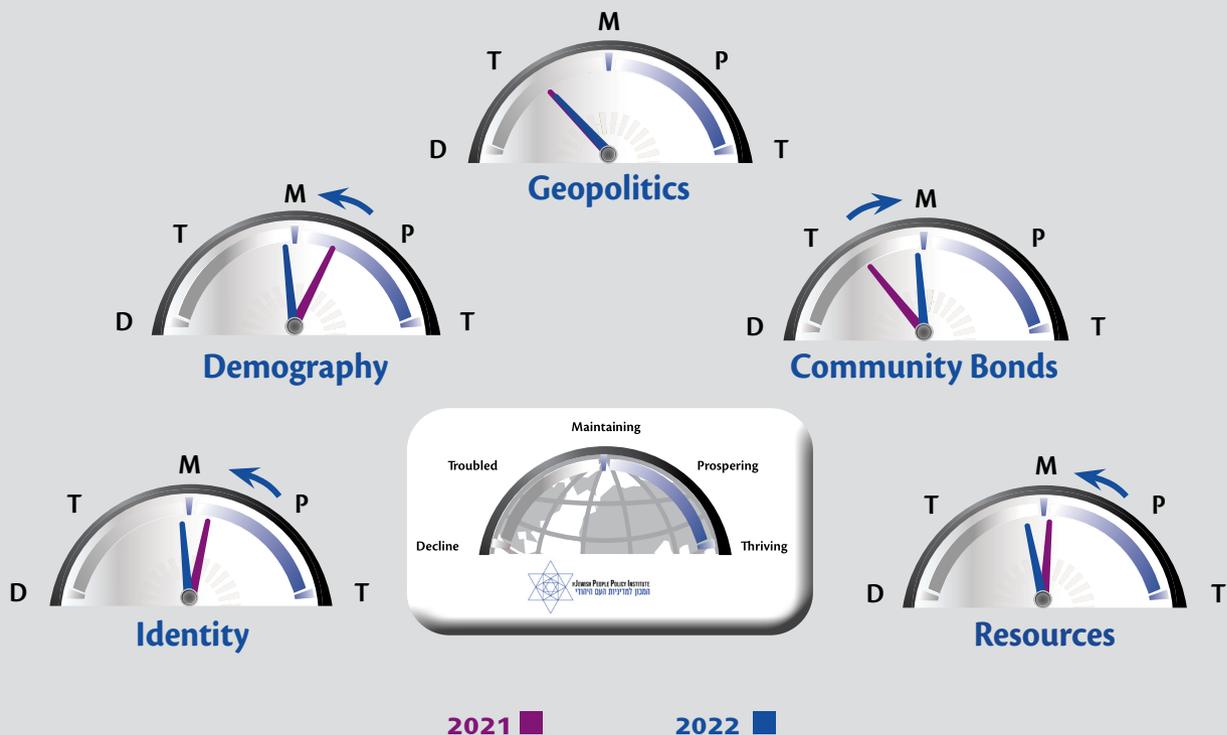
A comprehensive social and political response must be formulated to an expected increase in the number of Israelis who belong to the Jewish majority population but are not recognized as Jews (details on page 28)

Continued rapid growth of the ultra-Orthodox community requires intra- and extra-sectoral attention to the socioeconomic ramifications of this trend (details on page 29)



# Integrated Net Assessment: JPPI's Five Dimensions of Jewish Well-Being

## Key Drivers Affecting the Jewish People in 2021-2022



This year, the Jewish people contended with, and were affected by, developments in several main areas:<sup>1</sup>

**Geopolitical developments:** the war in Ukraine is intensifying trends that undermine the current “world order,” with implications for the international standing of the United States and the future of Europe. Efforts by the U.S. and its allies to reach a nuclear agreement with Iran continue (the agreement’s contours are not to Israel’s liking). There has been a significant improvement in Israel’s relations with a number of its Arab neighbors, but those states have also had some degree of rapprochement with Iran. A wave of Palestinian terrorism has erupted as well.

**Political developments:** Israel’s political system has not yet stabilized. The current coalition is the narrowest one possible, which casts a shadow over its ability to function in various important contexts. The American political system is preparing for mid-term elections and the possibility of a divided government, against the background of an expected dramatic Supreme Court ruling on abortion rights, with sociocultural repercussions. In France, the radical right has gained ground.

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1. In addition to the analysis provided by JPPI experts, we were aided this year in our discussion of the developments and our setting of the gauges by the responses obtained from detailed ranking questionnaires that were sent to all members of JPPI’s Executive Board and International Board of Governors, as well as to several dozen Jewish leaders, scholars, and intellectuals around the world.

**Societal developments:** As in the rest of the world, the influence of social media is also evident in Israel, which erodes trust in governmental institutions, polarizes the public discourse and leads to mutual delegitimization and negation (of the government and the political camps). Wide polarization is also evident in those discursive spaces pertaining to Israel and Israel-Diaspora relations. The involvement of Israeli Arabs in terrorist attacks in Israel, as well as the emphasis on fighting violence in the Arab sector, continues to indicate fragility in relations between Jews and non-Jews. Renewed unrest in the political arena has caused tensions to resurge between right and left and between secular Israelis and religious/ultra-Orthodox Israelis.

**Antisemitism:** Reports persist of an upsurge in antisemitic incidents around the world. Young Jews report “lowering their Jewish profile” out of fear of compromising their social status. There is controversy within the Jewish community, especially among its younger generation, about what “anti-Zionism” means in the context of antisemitism.

**Demographic developments:** In the wake of the Ukraine conflict, the pace and rate of immigration from Ukraine and Russia have increased. The immigration rates from most countries are slowly returning to their pre-pandemic levels. The rate of Jewish population increase in the Diaspora is slowing.

**The Covid-19 pandemic:** There has been significant recovery of trips by individuals and Jewish groups to Israel.

**Jewish identity:** The crisis in Ukraine reveals a gap between Israel and the Diaspora on issues of morality and Jewish survival. In Israel there was (at least at the beginning of the crisis) a “tribal” orientation, both in terms of maintaining ties with Russia (due to Israel’s national interests), and in terms of refugee absorption (a preference for those eligible for immigration under the Law of Return). In the

United States, the American Jewish tradition of resettling refugees and assisting oppressed communities has been renewed. In these communities the distinction between Jew and non-Jew has blurred, and there has been an emphasis on the ethical-universal element of the Jewish obligation to assist persecuted groups.

# 4

## Geopolitics



Geopolitical uncertainty has intensified in the last year, with implications for Israel and the Jewish people. The Russian invasion of Ukraine posed a dilemma for the Israeli government: how to safeguard Israeli interests vis-à-vis Moscow (ensuring freedom of movement in Syrian airspace and ensuring the safety of Russian Jews), while also standing with the United States in demonstrating commitment to the values of the free world. The consequences of the protracted crisis for the global system are not yet clear. In any case, a world order characterized by escalating great-power competition would make it difficult for Israel to navigate its relations with them.

Uncertainty also surrounds the fate of the Iranian nuclear issue. Teheran is closer than ever to having a nuclear bomb at its disposal. If an international agreement with Iran is signed, it is expected to be defective from Israel's perspective. Should the attempt to reach an agreement fail, Iran may be expected to step up its efforts to develop nuclear weapons. Intensified counterefforts on Israel's part may also be anticipated, along with an escalation of the conflict.

In Israel's relations with the Arab world, several encouraging developments stood out: ties with Egypt were strengthened; the Negev Summit was held with the participation of four Arab foreign

ministers, high-level visits were made, and the Abraham Accords were maintained (along with a thaw in Israel's relations with Turkey). At the same time, the deterrence achieved by Operation Guardian of the Walls seems to be eroding. While Abu Mazen has weakened and his exit from the world stage is imminent, Hamas is positioning itself as the defender of Jerusalem and is trying to inflame Judea and Samaria and to draw Arab Israelis into hostile action against Israel, so far with limited success.

This past year the threats to Israel remained the same, with no turning point on the horizon that would offer hope of a solution to the country's fundamental strategic problems. The situation could potentially devolve into violent confrontation on all fronts. Israel's relations with the United States are marked by issues that could emerge as hotbeds of controversy (Iran, the Palestinians, Ukraine, relations with Russia and China). The Israeli government's diplomatic maneuvering ability is limited politically. The constant danger to the coalition's stability is not conducive to strengthening Israel's strategic resilience. The geopolitical situation is dynamic. However, because the past year's developments are both negative and positive in effect, we are leaving the needle of the geopolitics gauge where it was last year, in the "troubled" range.

## Trends and Recommendations

**Dialogue with Jews who support Democratic Party must be deepened in order to harness their support and assistance in advancing Israel's positions on the Iran nuclear issue.**

**Explanation:** About two-thirds of U.S. Jews support the Democratic Party, and a similar share have expressed and continue to express support for the policies of Presidents Obama and Biden on the Iran nuclear issue.<sup>2</sup> This public's loyalty to the president is clear (63% support among Jews, much higher than among the general American public), meaning that Israel could benefit from efforts vis-à-vis the administration and Congress to advance policy elements where, in their view, Israeli and American interests overlap. Should a nuclear agreement be signed with Iran, Israel would fear Iran's continued covert progress, camouflaged by the agreement, toward the manufacture of a nuclear weapon, as well as its continued regional subversion – all while utilizing the resources it would be able to amass once the sanctions were removed. At the same time, Israel could face American pressure not to act against Iran, so as not to endanger the agreement. In such a situation, Israel should try to mobilize Israel-supporting Jewish Democrats to promote measures that would ensure strict enforcement of the agreement while bolstering Israel's military capabilities. Should an agreement not be

2. See: Jewish Electoral Institute, National Survey, April 2022.

signed, one could try to enlist these Jews for political efforts to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons and curb its regional subversion. A serious dialogue with the Jewish Democratic public is also needed to rekindle American Jewry's interest in the challenges facing Israel.

**Measures that would ignite Palestinian unrest should be avoided as much as possible, and efforts should be made toward constructive dialogue with the Palestinian Authority**

**Explanation:** Terrorist attacks throughout Israel and violence on the Temple Mount attest to uncertainty in the Palestinian arena. Overall, Hamas is maintaining the ceasefire on the Gaza border, while building power under the ceasefire's auspices. The erosion of Palestinian Authority President Abu Mazen's status, and the battle over who will succeed him, add to the instability. The Biden administration has made clear that it is not going to push for the resumption of permanent-status negotiations, which could spark a major crisis with the Israeli government. At the same time, due both to a low probability of success and to political disagreements, the policy of the Israeli government is not to initiate any diplomatic process with the Palestinians (a situation that plays into the hands of elements that want to blame Israel for perpetuating the conflict). Accordingly, Israel should avoid creating unnecessary crises, with an emphasis on measures that the Biden administration could

perceive as attempts to thwart the possibility of a future political solution.

**Expanding and deepening cooperation in the framework of the Abraham Accords is a government task for which world Jewry should also be mobilized**

**Explanation:** The Abraham Accords have changed the face of the Middle East. They have tightened the "alliance of moderates" – nations seeking regional stability; they have opened up opportunities for economic, technological, scientific, and cultural collaboration; and, above all, they have strengthened Israel's public legitimacy in the Arab world.

The Accords are also important for the Jewish People, not just in terms of strengthening Israel, but also in terms of fostering an open, friendly, and vigorous Jewish-Muslim dialogue. Alongside the measures taken by the Israeli government to further reinforce the Accords and their significance – as well as the constant striving to expand the circle of signatories, especially in conjunction with Saudi Arabia – it would be appropriate for Jewish communities around the world to take steps aimed at strengthening the Accords. These steps could include political lobbying in various countries (particularly the United States), to communicate the importance of the Accords and generate support for them, and also in direct dialogue with the countries that have joined the circle of signatories.



## Material Resources



Israel and the Jewish people are affected by global economic developments, which reflect the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and the Ukraine war crisis. These developments include increased inflation, and a shortage of various goods, both for use in technology (due to supply chain difficulties) and for civilian consumption (there are concerns about food and fuel shortages in the coming winter). Israel needs to invest in high-cost infrastructures for increased immigrant absorption and to drive down housing prices; it must also devise plans for reducing income disparities without

harming the productive sectors, especially high-tech. Tax increases could provide Israel a certain budgetary margin to allow such investments. Jewish communities around the world need to cope with the pandemic's consequences on communal structures and resources, as well as with the ongoing trend of decreasing population numbers (in the non-Orthodox world). We are moving the needle of the resources gauge in a slightly negative direction, mainly because of pessimistic economic forecasts for the coming year.

## Trends and Recommendations

### **The Israeli government and Israeli social change organizations must formulate strategy and take urgent measures to reduce education and wage gaps**

**Explanation:** Two economies are emerging in Israel, the high-tech economy and the economy of everything else. The high-tech engine is decoupling from the train. While Israel's minimum wage has risen 30% over the past decade and the country's average wage has increased by 34%, the average high-tech wage has climbed by over 50%. The average high-tech wage is about five times that of the minimum wage.<sup>3</sup> These economic gaps are giving rise to social disparities. Israeli high-tech is a "relatively homogeneous and closed circle" based on the work of "non-Haredi Jewish men," according to a report by the Israel Innovation Authority.<sup>4</sup> High-tech is "widening gaps, mainly due to the products of the education system and of Israeli higher education," according to a report by the Knesset Research and Information Center.<sup>5</sup> This situation is problematic in two respects: First, it leads to social unrest among those who have been "left behind." Second, it

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3. Data source: Central Bureau of Statistics.

4. High-Tech During the Coronavirus Pandemic: Report of the Israel Innovation Authority, 2020-2021. [Hebrew]

5. High-Tech as a Growth Engine in the Periphery, Knesset Research and Information Center, November 2021. [Hebrew]

could potentially cause an "exodus" of tech entrepreneurship from Israel, due to the excessive workload borne by a small number of people expected to financially support the larger group. The situation demands integrated action by the government aimed at the rapid and resolute advancement of Israel's peripheral groups (geographic and social) so that they can take part in the country's "high-tech economy." At the same time, aid and social-change organizations should receive support from donors in the high-tech sector, in order to mitigate societal tensions and reduce disparities. Such measures cannot be effectively realized without a significantly improved education system, and without demonstrating systemwide determination to achieve these objectives in the face of political, ideological, bureaucratic, and budgetary obstacles.

### **Diaspora communities (with the assistance of Israel) should prioritize significant Jewish education projects – economically, socially, and institutionally**

**Explanation:** Cumulative data from recent years indicate that: 1) Among young Diaspora Jews (except the Orthodox), the sense of connection to Jewish culture, the Jewish faith, the Jewish community, and the Jewish people is weakening. Commonly held claims that Jews are shifting from a "traditional" to a "cultural" identity model (i.e., "museums not synagogues") are not backed up by robust scholarly research and should be treated

with caution. 2) There is a significant positive correlation between Jewish education and Jewish action/attaching importance to Jewish life, both in this generation and in those to come. The Jewish communities, which invest their resources in many different and important objectives, should draw the appropriate conclusions from the data and focus philanthropic and administrative efforts on extending non-Orthodox Jewish education to all those interested, ensuring that it will be geographically available, economically accessible, educationally excellent, and ideologically pluralistic. Investment in Jewish day schools and preschools, in weekly courses and enrichment activities, in summer camps – this appears to be the most worthwhile and urgent option for those who want to perpetuate the existence of active Jewish life in the Diaspora.

**Philanthropy in Israel, by both individuals and institutions, should be encouraged, emphasizing the Jewish value of giving as customary in Diaspora communities worldwide**

**Explanation:** The great success of Israeli high-tech has created an economic class of wealthy Israelis whose numbers have increased significantly. These are primarily young people who have no multigenerational family tradition of giving. Data on individual and corporate philanthropy in Israel point to low donation levels compared to other Western countries, and especially with Jews abroad, who are leaders in the philanthropic

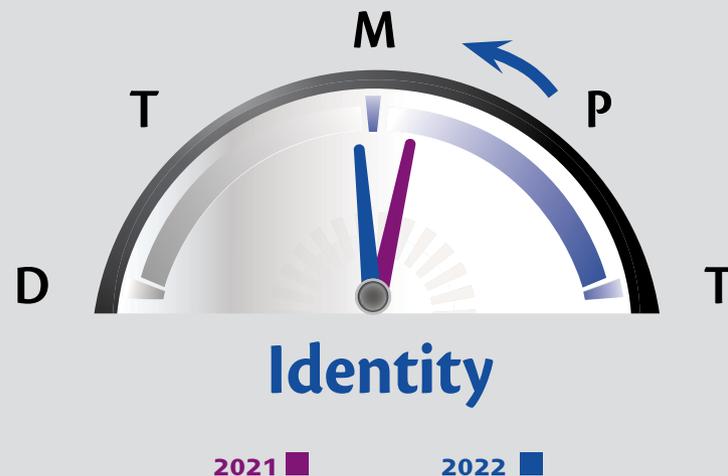
sphere.<sup>6</sup> Although Israeli philanthropy is trending upward to a degree, it is still far from the desired destination. The flourishing of high-tech constitutes an opportunity for Israeli capitalists to step up their contribution to the development of Israeli society. The strengthening of philanthropy as a value should be supported by governmental moves (tax incentives) and social measures (education, raising expectations, respect, and recognition), and will serve three important objectives. First: increased philanthropy will make it possible to reinforce efforts in the educational, cultural, and welfare spheres. Second: it will promote mutual responsibility on the part of different groups in Israeli society. Third: it will embody a unifying Jewish value for Israel and the Diaspora.

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6. See: Philanthropy in Israel: an Updated Picture, Taub Center, 2017; Philanthropy is the lifeblood of the British 2021 July, eJP, Zaki Cooper, Jewish Community; Israeli Philanthropy, 2012-2015, Central Bureau of Statistics [Hebrew]; “Jewish Philanthropy During COVID-19 Focuses on Need, Not Affinity,” Hanna Shaul Bar Nissim, Inside Philanthropy, February 2021.



## Identity and Identification



A number of reports this year have noted the persistence and growing severity of antisemitic phenomena in many countries;<sup>7</sup> some of the reports have gone so far as to declare the effort to counter antisemitism a “failure.” Attitudes toward Israel are also affected by rising antisemitism, as well as by political polarization, especially in the United States; as a result, young Jews are lowering

7. ‘See: Antisemitism Worldwide Report 2021, Tel Aviv University, April 2022.

their Jewish-Zionist profile in an attempt maintain their social status among their non-Jewish friends.<sup>8</sup> At the same time, the share of Diaspora Jews who observe Jewish traditions (Passover Seders, kosher homes, and the like) continues to fall. Based on the relevant data, we have moved the needle of the identity gauge in a slightly negative direction this year.

8. See: AJC Survey of American Jewish Millennials, March 2022.

## Trends and Recommendations

### **The Israel government should formulate a strategy with clear and (where possible) measurable objectives for battling antisemitism**

**Explanation:** JPPI reports have been warning for several years of the possibility that the trend of resurgent antisemitism is on the rise and rooted in deep societal currents of varying sources. The return of antisemitism, as unfortunate and distressing as it is, could become a long-term fixture of global discourse, while the ability of Jewish communities and Israel to influence it is limited. Under these circumstances, Israel, as the world's strongest Jewish organizing force, cannot confine itself to attempts to "fight antisemitism." Israelis must understand what it will mean to live in an era when antisemitism is a persistent factor in Jewish life, and prepare for that era accordingly, while formulating plans for appropriate explanatory, diplomatic, and security activity. Last year we recommended that the government "entrust the response to antisemitism to a single integrative body with powers and implementation capabilities." We reaffirm this recommendation, and with greater urgency, in light of data whose meaning is unmistakable.

### **Action must be taken to promote the unifying presence of Jewish holidays in Israel's public and private spheres**

**Explanation:** Of all the components of Jewish identity in Israel, the most widely accepted,

and the least controversial, are the holidays and festivals.<sup>9</sup> Israeli Jews who disagree too strongly on basic components of identity for their differences to be bridged, still feel that the celebration of holidays and festivals gives expression to their Judaism. This finding should motivate institutions and organizations for joint efforts to make Jewish festivals more enjoyably present in Israel's public and private spheres. When setting such processes in motion, attention should be paid to the kinds of feelings that Jewish-inflected language and terminology elicit in Israelis. In last year's Annual Assessment (2021), JPPI recommended that "the new government [...] encourage measures that foster the development of a non-religious Jewish identity." This recommendation is further supported by recent research that has identified a much greater willingness of Jews to study "Jewish texts" than to "learn Torah," despite the fact that, in at least some instances, the practical meanings of these terms are identical. The conclusion to be drawn from this and other examples is that those who plan holiday activities should use the language of Jewish culture rather than of Jewish religion. This is especially the case when the activities are intended for a secular and traditional non-religious public with reservations, sometimes significant ones, about anything couched in religious language (which has unfavorable associations with the political arena).

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9. Based on a Jewish People Policy Institute report published this year: "Who Are Jews": the Views of Israeli Jews, Shmuel Rosner, Professor Camil Fuchs, Noah Slepko. [Hebrew]

# Community Bonds



The easing of the Covid-19 pandemic has led to a resumption of travel by Jews, to mutual visits, and to the relaunch of Birthright-Taglit and MASA program activity. The war in Ukraine and the absorption of Jewish refugees, along with aliyah from other countries, including those where antisemitism is on the rise, are reinforcing Israel's status as a refuge for the Jewish people. The crisis in Ukraine has also fostered cooperation between Israel and Jewish organizations in the Diaspora, on the commonly accepted basis of humanitarian aid to Jews and refugees. In Israel, a large majority of Jews feel attached to all Jews

(about 70%), and most see a shared future for all Jews (64%). At the same time, Israelis continue to have reservations about American Jewry's attempts to exert influence on Israeli policy, especially in the foreign and defense fields; there are expectation gaps in this regard between the Jewish people's two largest communities (most young American Jews feel that they have a right to try to influence Israel).

Other data attest to an erosion of attachment to Israel among the younger generation of Diaspora Jews, and to an expanding critical discourse on the meaning of Zionism, and

even Zionism's legitimacy. However, due to the resumption of in-person encounters and the dramatic impact of Jewish refugee absorption in Israel (2022 is witnessing a two-decade high in immigration), we have moved the needle of the community bonds gauge in a positive direction toward "maintaining."

## Trends and Recommendations

**The political context (in terms of ideology and right-left differences) should be neutralized wherever possible in managing Israel-Diaspora relations**

**Explanation:** The government and political pendulum is constantly moving, but Israel-Diaspora relations need stability, regardless of the pendulum's oscillations. Such stability is hard to find, due to a growing tendency among Jews to perceive the issue of attachment to other Jews as yet another standard area of disagreement between right and left. Thus, Jews in Western countries (with an emphasis on the U.S.), but also, and to no lesser degree, Jews in Israel (per JPPI's Pluralism Index), position themselves on the attachment-to-other-Jews scale based on political self-identification (those who feel "close" to the Diaspora – rightists; those who are "distant" – leftists). This phenomenon has deep roots, some of them touching on essential issues that are not easy to address. However, educational, and explanatory efforts should be made to close this gap as much as possible. Such efforts should be based on a model

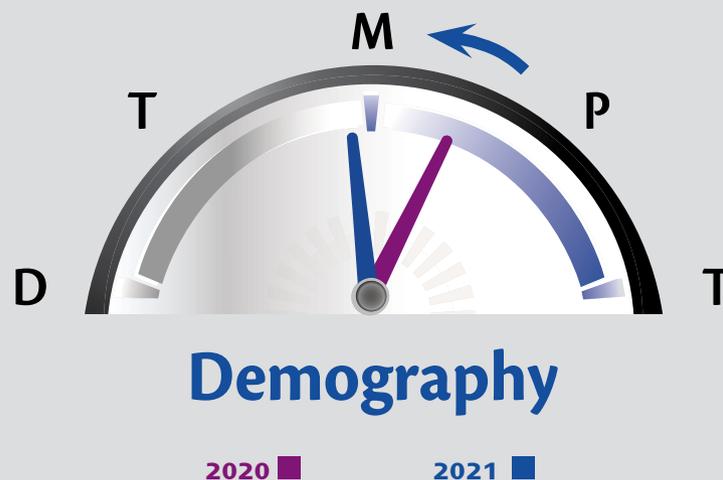
of inter-community discourse on issues of culture, history, tradition, sustainability, and high-tech, and strive to reduce preoccupation with controversial matters that make it hard to maintain relationships that are constructive and helpful for all Jews (it must be understood and accepted that, even once this reduction has been achieved, Jews will continue to be deeply divided on important fundamental questions).

**Global Jewish cooperation to provide assistance to the Jews of Ukraine and Russia should be expanded**

**Explanation:** The crisis precipitated by the war is creating an opportunity for world Jewry to unite around an undisputed goal, and to participate in a joint effort to assist Jews in distress. This effort should be pursued both via formal channels (the Israeli government and the major organizations of world Jewry), and through the encouragement of informal channels (partnership of volunteers, nonprofits, and foundations, but not via the government or the large organizations). Most of the work should focus on the physical rescue of Jews needing such rescue, on promoting aliya to Israel, and on the absorption of olim in Israel and their integration in the fabric of Israeli life. There should be investment not only in the economic aspects of absorption, but also in the socio-educational aspects, to help the olim (immigrants under the Law of Return, not all of whom are halachically Jewish) to integrate in Israel's majority Jewish culture.



# Jewish Demography



The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the demographics of the Jewish people (and of the entire world) is evident on several levels, including a decrease in birthrates and an increase in mortality rates. These trends could have a long-term impact on the size of Diaspora Jewish communities in particular, as these communities had higher average ages and lower birthrates to begin with. At the same time, immigration to Israel has rebounded, after coming to a halt during the

Covid-19 years, a trend intensified by the war in Ukraine, which has added several tens of thousands of olim to the regular total. The share of the ultra-Orthodox in the Jewish population on the rise, but the challenges emerging due to this trend, and their impact on relations between different Jewish communities, have not yet received adequate attention. For this reason, the needle of the demography gauge has been moved in a slightly negative direction.

## Trends and Recommendations

### **An effort should be made to retain the immigrants from Ukraine in Israel, along with family members who have been left behind, and to also encourage immigration from Russia**

**Explanation:** The war in Ukraine caused a major refugee crisis, which Israel is involved in addressing; a minority of the refugees are not Jewish, while most are eligible for Israeli citizenship under the Law of Return and are being absorbed as olim.<sup>10</sup> These refugees came to Israel out of immediate necessity, without planning such a move in advance; if and when the war in Ukraine ends (and depending on its outcomes), they will consider whether to return to their homes or choose Israel as their long-term home. Additionally, a significant number of the refugees-immigrants have left family members behind (males of conscription age in particular); they, too, will have to decide when the war ends whether to return the émigré family to the home they left, or to join their relatives in Israel. Under these circumstances, the absorption and rapid integration of these olim is of special and urgent importance; it is imperative that they feel “at home” in Israel even before they reach a crossroads where they will have to decide which direction to take. At the same time, Israel should, with

10. Per the Ministry of Aliyah and Immigration, 42,675 olim immigrated to Israel between Independence Day 2021 and Independence Day 2022. The countries from which the most immigrants came this year are Russia (33%) and Ukraine (27%).

appropriate caution, encourage immigration from Russia, where the economic, political, and social situation is also deteriorating due to the war.

### **A comprehensive social and political response should be formulated to an anticipated increase in the number of Israelis who belong to the Jewish majority population but are not recognized as Jews**

**Explanation:** There is a gap between the Orthodox establishment’s demand for conversion according to its conception, and the attitude of most Israeli Jews, for whom conversion is either: 1) entirely unnecessary (because self-definition is enough); 2) essential but not necessarily via an Orthodox rabbi; 3) essential and should be accomplished via an Orthodox beit din (religious court) that adopts lenient halachic tests. This gap has implications on several levels. First, there is an impact on the public’s relations with the conversion establishment, which is perceived as imposing the system of the minority on the majority. Second, the gap affects willingness of Israelis to convert. The measures currently underway to change the conversion system may be important in and of themselves (as a means of weakening the conversion monopoly), but it is doubtful whether they will bring about a major jump in the number of conversions. Under these circumstances, several developments should be taken into account. The first is the major and continued increase in the share of Jews

do not marry officially (because they cannot do so through the Rabbinat, which is the sole permitted avenue for marriage). The second is growing pressure, perhaps to the point of decisiveness, to institute civil marriage so that couples whom the Rabbinat does not recognize as Jews can marry. The third development is an anticipated rise in the number of families who see themselves as “Jewish” but whom certain sectors will regard as “non-Jewish” or “mixed,” which will heighten already-existing tensions stemming from claims of inclusion and exclusion based on the controversial question: “Who is a Jew?” Under these circumstances, halachic pluralism in the conversion sphere may not be the optimal solution to all of the problems, but it is the most realistic option available for implementation.

**Continued rapid growth of the ultra-Orthodox community requires both intra- and extra-sectoral attention to the socioeconomic ramifications of this trend**

**Explanation:** It has long been known that the share of the ultra-Orthodox within the Jewish population is rapidly increasing. This year, several reports and forecasts addressed the issue, noting that a decade and a half from now, one out of every four Jews around the world will be Haredi.<sup>11</sup> This trend poses a challenge to the ultra-Orthodox communities,

which will have to reconsider their policy as communities with an ethos founded on a minority consciousness (which will soon be irrelevant). It also poses a challenge to non-Haredi Jewish communities, which need to consider how they ought to respond to this trend. From an economic perspective it is clear that this challenge must be addressed as soon as possible (Israel won’t be able to flourish if the economic contribution of a significant community within it is relatively small). From a socioeconomic perspective, the challenge is no less meaningful. Data gathered this year indicate the degree to which non-Haredi Israelis feel alienated from the Haredi community.<sup>12</sup> The ultra-Orthodox community’s growing dominance could exacerbate societal tensions, and/or bring about gradual change in the character and composition of Israeli society, manifesting in a regression in education and employment levels. Under these circumstances, it is worth remembering that public policy has great power to influence the ultra-Orthodox public, and that the government has a duty to use that power wisely, but also continuously and determinedly, with attention to the sector’s unique characteristics, but also to the general needs of the State of Israel.

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11. See: Institute for Jewish Policy Research, Haredi Jews Around the World: Population Trends and Estimates, L. Daniel Staetsky, May 2022.

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12. See: Shared Spaces, Challenging Spaces: What the Findings of JPPI’s 2022 Pluralism Index Survey Reveal, Shmuel Rosner, Camil Fuchs, Noah Slepokov.

# 9

## Selected Indicators of World Jewry

Country/ Region	Core Jewish population		GDP per capita, PPP, US \$	Index of Human Development – World Rank	Recent out-marriage rate (%)	Aliya
	1970	2021	2020	2020		2020
<b>World</b>	12,633,000	16,472,000	-	-	-	19,676
<b>Israel</b>	2,582,000	6,870,000	39,489.3	19	2	-
<b>North America</b>	5,686,000	7,694,000	-	-	-	2,532
United States	5,400,000	7,300,000	63,206.5	17	61	2,296
Canada	286,000	394,000	46,572.1	16	25	236
<b>Europe (non-FSU)</b>	1,331,000	1,092,000	-	-	-	3,431
France	530,000	446,000	46,991.2	26	>30	2,407
UK	390,000	292,000	46,482.9	13	26	459
Germany	30,000	118,000	54,844.5	6	45-55	80
Hungary	70,000	47,000	33,075.9	40	>50	27
Netherlands	30,000	30,000	59,266.9	8	>50	46
Other	281,000	159,000	-	-	-	412
<b>Latin America</b>	514,000	376,000	-	-	-	1,588
Argentina	282,000	175,000	20,770.7	46	25-35	551
Brazil	90,000	92,000	14,835.4	84	25-35	512
Mexico	35,000	40,000	18,444.1	74	<5	174
Other countries	107,000	69,000	-	-	-	351
<b>FSU</b>	2,151,000	227,000	-	-	-	11,011
Russian Federation	808,000	150,000	29,812.2	52	>70	6,644
Ukraine	777,000	43,000	13,054.8	74	>75	2,937
Rest FSU	566,000	34,000	-	-	-	1,430
<b>Asia (rest)</b>	104,000	33,000	-	-	-	223
<b>Oceania</b>	70,000	126,000	-	-	-	83
Australia	65,000	119,000	53,316.9	8	33	82
Other countries	5,000	7,000	-	-	-	1
<b>Africa</b>	195,000	54,000	-	-	-	348
South Africa	118,000	52,000	13,360.6	114	19	269
Other countries	77,000	2,000	-	-	-	79



## A Look at Ukrainian Jewry: Demography and Society

The Jewish population of Ukraine is shrinking. There are two main reasons for this. First, deaths outnumber births, meaning that population size is declining naturally. Additionally, Ukrainian Jews have a high emigration rate. These two trends have had a dramatic impact on the Ukrainian Jewish community, which has dwindled by 91% since the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

It is difficult to estimate the size of Ukraine's Jewish population. The country's last census was conducted in 2001. The census planned for 2010 was postponed until 2020 and postponed again. Moreover, no large-scale surveys of the Jewish community have been conducted in Ukraine. The lack of a reliable body of data poses a challenge to those seeking to determine the exact number of Ukrainian Jews. However, attempts can be made to arrive at an approximate number.

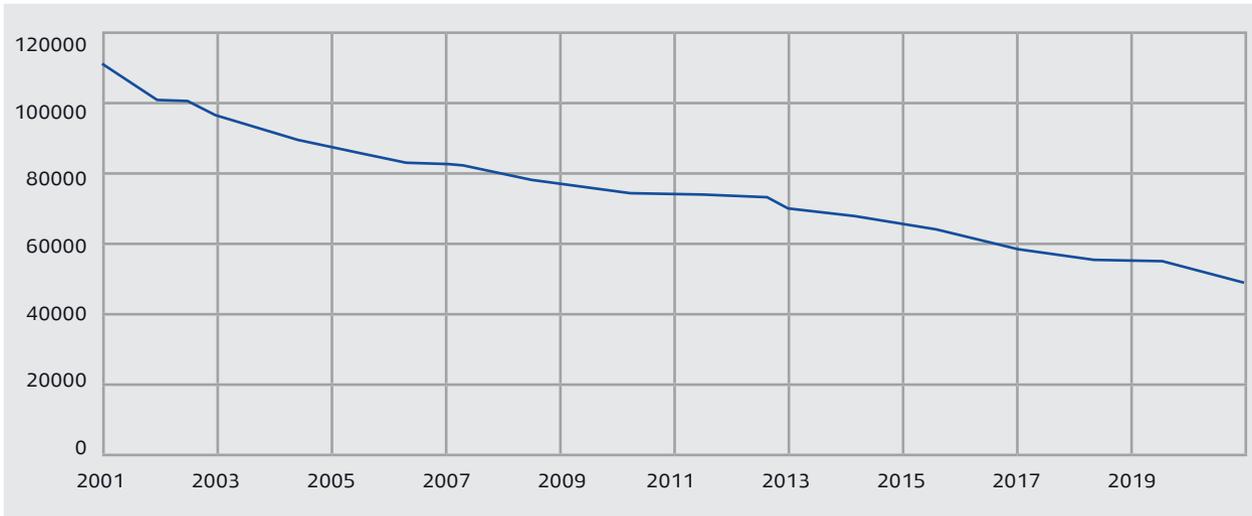
### Population Size

According to Ukraine's most recent census, which was conducted in December 2001, there were 104,300 Jews living in the country. However, the Jewish population of Ukraine is According to Ukraine's most recent census, which was conducted in December 2001, there were 104,300 Jews living in the country.

However, the Jewish population of Ukraine is known to have rapidly dwindled since that time. The demographer Sergio Della Pergola estimates that the core Jewish population of Ukraine dropped from 100,000 at the start of 2002 to 45,000 in January 2020.<sup>1</sup> Della Pergola's estimate is supported by data from ARDA (the Association of Religion Data Archive), drawn from the Database of World Religions.<sup>2</sup> The data point to a major erosion of the Jewish population, both in absolute terms and as a percentage of the total Ukrainian population. In 2000, Jews constituted 0.26% of the Ukrainian population. By 2015, that share had dropped to half its previous level.

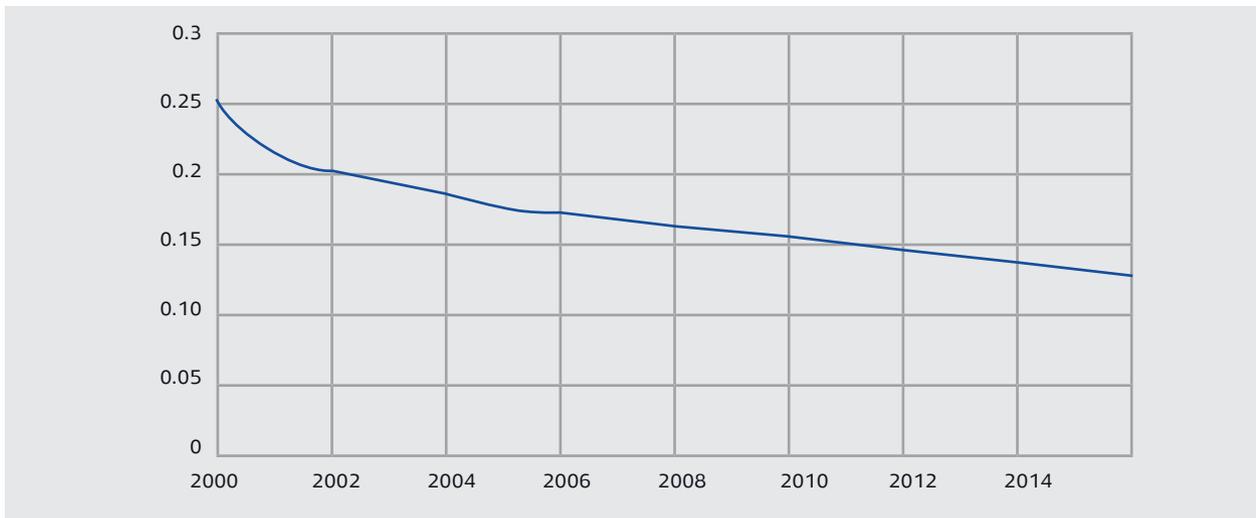
Some of this erosion of the Ukrainian Jewish community is the result of natural negative population growth, due to the fact that the number of deaths in the community is significantly higher than the number of births. Fertility rates are low, and the community is aging: the number of elderly significantly exceeds the number of children.<sup>3</sup> Per the 2001 census, only 5% of Ukrainian Jews were under age 14, while 70% were over age 45; half were over age 65.<sup>4</sup> The median age of Jews in Russia and Ukraine is now estimated to be around 57-60.<sup>5</sup>

## Estimated Jewish Population of Ukraine



Source: Della Pergola, American Jewish Yearbook, 2000-2020

## Jews, as a Percentage of Ukraine Population



Source: ARDA

The core Jewish population of Ukraine includes those who self-define as Jews. In the absence of a census or recent survey data, it is almost impossible to accurately estimate the number of people who currently identify as Jews. In the Soviet Union, Jews were considered a nationality, and were registered as Jews in official documents. Those with two Jewish parents were forced to declare themselves as Jews; those of mixed background clearly preferred to choose a non-Jewish nationality. According to the Russian microcensus of 1994, only 6.2% of all children under the age of 16 whose fathers were Jewish and whose mothers were Russian, and only 4.1% of all minors whose fathers were Russian and whose mothers were Jewish, were registered as Jews.<sup>6</sup>

The common approach in modern surveys of Jewish identity is to rely on self-definition, and to allow personal autonomy in decisions pertaining to this classification. Of course, self-definition implies a measure of flexibility, and the identity in question may change in character over time. In any case, without focused recent data on Jews, the sole means of estimating Ukraine's core Jewish population is to use other accessible data, to perform a population analysis, to calculate birth and death numbers, emigration and return rates, the number of those joining and leaving the community, arrivals and departures, those starting to self-define as Jews and those ceasing to do so. While data on natural population increase and migration

can be found, changes in self-definition cannot be estimated. In Ukraine the problem is particularly acute, as the latest census was conducted over two decades ago.

In the complete absence of data on self-reported religious identity, contact with Jewish communal organizations may serve as an indirect measure of Jewish identification. This approach harks back to attempts to estimate Jewish community size based on affiliation with a religious stream. This approach should be used cautiously as it poses an overestimation risk, due to exaggerated estimates provided by the relevant organizations, or double counting. The Joint Distribution Committee ("the Joint") is one of the Jewish organizations currently active in Ukraine. It coordinates the actions of a large number of charitable organizations and "is serving an estimated 40,000 Jewish elderly and 2,500 poor Jewish children and their families." This figure is very close to the previously mentioned estimate of Ukraine's core Jewish population, but it does not include people aged 18-60. This raises the possibility that a significant subgroup is not being identified as Jewish in the population census, though it is in contact (whether directly, or through family members) with Jewish community organizations.

Another potential means of estimating Jewish population size is based on Jewish parentage information. In the Soviet Union, Jewish endogamy (marriage within the ethnic group) rates were much lower than in the

rest of the Jewish world. Of all marriages in Ukraine in 1994 where at least one partner was Jewish, 74% of Jewish men married non-Jewish women, while 66% of Jewish women married non-Jewish men. The endogamy rates declined even further as the pool of potential Jewish spouses shrank, due to emigration and population aging.<sup>7</sup> As a result, the number of Ukrainians with one Jewish parent is much larger than the number appearing in the core Jewish population estimate – 90,000. Given the rising rate of marriage between Jews and non-Jews in Ukraine, the gap between the Jewish core population size and the size of the population with at least one Jewish parent is undoubtedly much larger than in countries with high endogamy rates.

Parentage – it should be noted that *Halacha* stipulates maternal parentage – this is also crucially important for establishing Jewishness in the context of Israeli law. For demographic and sociological reasons, marriages between Jewish men and non-Jewish women in Ukraine are much more common than marriages between Jewish women and non-Jewish men. For this reason, the number of children born to Jewish fathers and non-Jewish mothers is substantially higher than the number of children with Jewish mothers and non-Jewish fathers. The share of children born to two Jewish parents, as a percentage of all those born to Jewish mothers, declined from 83% in 1958 to 31% in 1992. Although we have no corresponding data on Jewish fathers, it is clear that the share of children born to non-

Jewish fathers who also have Jewish mothers (i.e., those considered to be halachically Jewish) will be smaller than the share of [those born to] Jewish fathers, perhaps by 50%. Therefore, we may estimate that less than half of the young people in Ukraine who have a Jewish parent (those born during the past 20 years) are halachically Jewish. It is, in fact, reasonable to assume that the share is close to a third, given that there are very few children who have two Jewish parents, and many more children with Jewish fathers and non-Jewish mothers than children with Jewish mothers and non-Jewish fathers (some of the Jewish mothers are themselves the daughters of Jewish fathers and non-Jewish mothers, meaning that they are not considered Jewish according to Halacha).

A definition of Jewishness in terms of immigration eligibility according to Israel's Law of Return relates to the children and grandchildren of Jews. This definition has been expanded to include the spouses and children of those eligible. If we look at the size of the Jewish community based on this definition, the number of those belonging to the community surges dramatically to approximately 200,000. Given the trends mentioned above, and in particular the growing rate of marriage between Jews and non-Jews, we may assume that the gap between the more restrictively defined Jewish population and the population as defined by the Law of Return's more expansive criteria will continue to grow.

## Jewish Emigration

The main factor behind the erosion of the Ukrainian Jewish population is emigration, especially during the period following the breakup of the Soviet Union. Ukraine's Jewish population has fallen by 91% since 1989. Over 350,000 of those eligible for Israeli citizenship have emigrated to Israel; furthermore, many Jews have emigrated to the United States and Germany. Emigration rates peaked during the period 1989-2001, when 128,500 Ukrainian Jews left for the United States, and 92,700 for Germany. In those same years, 299,700 Ukrainian Jews emigrated to Israel.<sup>8</sup>

Emigration was at its height during the period immediately after the Soviet Union's dissolution; by the final years of the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century it had stabilized at a much lower level. Surveys show that those who

emigrated from Ukraine to Israel during this period were motivated primarily by concern about financial instability and its impact on the next generation. The immigrants tended to come from the professionally trained and academically educated strata of the middle class.<sup>9</sup> Later there was a resurgence of emigration to Israel, sparked by the 2014 Russian-Ukrainian conflict in Crimea and Donbas. Except for a temporary halt due to the coronavirus pandemic, emigration rates have since remained high, a result of the ongoing military confrontation. Because many Ukrainian Jews once lived or currently live in Russian-speaking areas in the eastern part of the country, they suffered greater harm from the conflict relative to their population share.<sup>10</sup> Some Jews decided to leave the conflict area and emigrate to Russia.<sup>11</sup> Others went to other countries, including Israel.

### Emigration from Ukraine to Israel



Source: Tolts 2019

Most Ukrainian Jewish migration was from Ukraine to other countries, Israel among them. But there is evidence that Ukraine's Israeli population is growing due to emigration from Israel, a large proportion of which consists of Ukrainians who decided not to settle in Israel permanently.<sup>12</sup>

According to the Ministry of Aliyah and Integration, out of 1,020,000 Jews and family members of Jews who had immigrated to Israel from the former Soviet Union (FSU) as of July 2013, a tenth did not remain in Israel permanently, but rather migrated again.<sup>13</sup> It is estimated that half of these returned to their countries of origin, while the others continued to a third destination, such as the United States, Canada, or (less commonly) one of the European Union countries. Many chose to live in more than one country; a few tens of thousands appear to divide their time between Israel and one of the FSU states.

The main reason for this repeat migration, that is, the return to Ukraine of those who had emigrated from Ukraine to Israel, was the difficulty of adapting to Israeli life. Many considered the professional opportunities available in Israel and Ukraine, and on that basis determined their stance regarding migration. During the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Israel's climate was also mentioned as a reason for repeat migration. Many, however, regarded the return to Ukraine as temporary, and intended to resettle in Israel at a later point.

It is hard to accurately estimate the number of Israelis living in Ukraine, as the border authorities record those leaving and entering Israel, but not the countries where they actually live. Jewish representatives in Ukraine have provided widely varying estimates, ranging from 9,000 to 20,000. The Israeli ambassador's 2013 assertion that at any given time there are 45,000 Israelis in Ukraine may be the correct way to describe the situation. The large volume of trips by Israelis to Ukraine for pilgrimage, tourism, family, or business purposes makes it hard to get a more accurate picture of this mobile population.<sup>14</sup>

## Tourism and Pilgrimage

Tourists, pilgrims, and those employed in the heritage tourism industry constitute a major component of Jewish presence in Ukraine. Israelis and Jews from all over the world visit Ukrainian sites of Jewish interest. These sites include cities where important Jewish communities historically resided, sites where Jewish tragedies occurred, or places where rabbinical figures lived or were buried, and which are now pilgrimage destinations. Ukraine is home to many sites of spiritual meaning to Christians, Muslims, and Jews, and these have become significant pilgrimage sites since the dismantling of the Soviet Union.

The best-known pilgrimage site is the burial place of Rabbi Nachman, founder of the

Breslov Hassidic movement, in the city of Uman. This site's popularity has grown rapidly; the hundreds who visited the site annually in the 1980s have turned into tens of thousands (the estimate for 2016 was 30,000).<sup>15</sup> Although Rabbi Nachman's grave is most commonly visited at Rosh Hashanah, i.e., in the fall, visitors come throughout the year. Some return each year to visit the gravesite, and form social relationships with each other. In addition to those who attach spiritual importance to the pilgrimage, there are others who are drawn to the site by the economic opportunities and volunteering options generated by the pilgrimage activity.

Although the pilgrimage activity benefits the local population economically, it also gives rise to tensions. Some Ukrainians are offended by the transformation of part of their home city into a Jewish holy site, where customs alien to the local population hold sway; they have held protests against the influx of visitors. In certain cases, Israeli governmental representatives have exerted pressure on the local authorities, hoping to ensure that the pilgrimage activity is not adversely affected by local opposition.<sup>16</sup>

## Antisemitism

Ukrainian antisemitism levels are similar to those of the other East European nations. Anti-Defamation League data indicate no meaningful difference between the views of Ukrainians and those of citizens of other

countries in the region. Pew Research Center data show that 15% of Ukrainians would not want a Jewish neighbor, and that 32% would not want a Jewish family member. Similar views have been found in other FSU countries, such as Belarus and Latvia. What is unique about Ukraine is that those who identify as Catholics, or who are unaffiliated with any religion, tend to have more negative attitudes toward Jews than those who identify as Orthodox Christians.

The level of antisemitic activity in Ukraine is a matter of disagreement. According to the Congress of Ethnic Communities in Ukraine, antisemitic incidents are very rare, and antisemitism manifests primarily in damage to sites or property (vandalism). Memorial monuments, cemeteries, and synagogues have been vandalized; there was an arson attempt on a synagogue in Kherson in 2020. The past five years have seen a decline in vandalism.<sup>17</sup>

On the other hand, data collected by Jewish organizations relate to a broader definition of what constitutes an antisemitic incident, which includes verbal attacks. Accordingly, these data indicate a much higher number of incidents than Ukraine's official statistics suggest. Basically, the data place Ukraine among those countries with the highest number of antisemitic incidents, along with the UK, France, and Germany. However, physical attacks on Jews are rare, and government agencies are making an effort to monitor antisemitic crime.

After the Berlin Wall fell, Ukraine was the first of the former Communist bloc nations to establish diplomatic ties with Israel; the first president of independent Ukraine, Leonid Kravchuk, visited Israel in 1993. He promised to safeguard the rights of ethnic minorities in Ukraine, and to fight antisemitism.<sup>18</sup> Today, most of the country's antisemitic political parties are on the political fringe, and their voters have displayed willingness to elect leaders who openly acknowledge their Jewishness. There was actually a period in 2019 when both the prime minister and the president of Ukraine were Jews. However, the antisemitic Svoboda party has been part of the coalition, and its representatives have held ministerial posts. Antisemitism is present in Ukrainian political discourse, especially regarding the coronavirus and the prominence of Jewish politicians.

In 2009 Ukraine approved the Terezin Declaration on the restitution of stolen assets from the World War II era but has not enacted any laws that would further the restitution of private Jewish property confiscated during the war. There is evidence that the Ukrainian authorities have been slower to act with regard to historic Jewish property than with regard to the assets of other religious groups. Of the 2,500 Jewish community buildings that were confiscated, the Association of Jewish Organizations and Communities of Ukraine (VAAD) and the Eurasian Jewish Committee on Restitution estimate that only 40 synagogues have been returned to

Jewish community control.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, these organizations estimate that between 10,000 and 15,000 plots of land have yet to be returned to Jewish hands.<sup>20</sup>

Judaism is present in the Ukrainian public realm. Among other things, rabbis are invited to official events;<sup>21</sup> traditional ceremonies such as Hanukkah candle-lighting are held publicly; and ceremonies are performed to commemorate events of the Holocaust. The legacy of the Holocaust is a sensitive topic in Ukraine, as it is throughout Eastern Europe. During the Soviet period, the Jewish identity of the victims was largely downplayed, while in the post-Communist era the focus of interest shifted to crimes perpetrated under the Soviet regime. Collaboration with the Nazis and war crimes were denied or repressed, and anti-Jewish conspiracy theories became widespread. Holocaust remembrance and memorial sites such as Babi Yar spark bitter debate over the degree to which Ukraine should focus attention on the suffering of the Jews.<sup>22</sup>

## Community life

The dissolution of the Soviet Union made it possible for the Jewish community organizations in Ukraine to expand their activity, which focuses mainly on education, charity, and social work. As of 2015, there were approximately 600 Jewish communities and organizations in Ukraine, including 63 schools (the vast majority of them supplementary schools) and 28 periodicals. All of these

entities belong to one of 15 “umbrella” groups that handle the affairs of the communities.<sup>23</sup> Political tensions and power struggles subsist between these groups on issues such as the Chief Rabbi position. At times there have been no fewer than four men claiming the title of Chief Rabbi of Ukraine.<sup>24</sup>

The largest of the community umbrella organizations is the Association of Chabad Hasidism of Jewish Religious Organizations of Ukraine, which sponsors 125 organizations, 29 schools, and 17 periodicals.<sup>25</sup> Ukraine is home to 200 Chabad families dispersed across 35 cities; these families are part of the extensive network of Chabad emissaries who are sent to Jewish communities the world over. Chabad in Ukraine runs orphanages and educational institutions; according to the movement, it maintains the largest Jewish center in the world – the 46,000 square meter Menorah Center in Dnipro.

Although religious observance levels in Ukraine’s Jewish communities are generally low, attitudes toward Judaism as a religion have changed over the years, reflecting developments similar to those that have arisen in the general Ukrainian population. Those who grew up during the pre-Communist era tend to have positive views of Judaism as a faith, while the religious aspects of Judaism have largely negative associations for Jews who came to maturity under the Soviet regime. By contrast, the younger generation is once again adopting a positive outlook on Judaism as a religious tradition. Attitudes

toward Judaism are shaped by tradition-based experiences in the home; those who have two Jewish parents therefore tend to have a stronger emotional connection to the tradition.<sup>26</sup>

Because most Jews in Ukraine are not married to Jews, non-Orthodox organizations might have been expected to play a more dominant role in the community. However, it is actually the Orthodox organizations that are setting the tone in Ukraine<sup>27</sup>: the country is home to 200 Orthodox communities, versus 51 non-Orthodox communities and 26 independent communities.<sup>28</sup> One reason for this is the decision by the World Union for Progressive Judaism not to invest in FSU Jewish communities based on the assumption that these communities would soon disappear. At the same time, Chabad’s deeply rooted ideal of emissary work has spurred the movement to send rabbis and families to Ukraine, even where living conditions are harsh.

Beyond the recognized Jewish community, Ukraine is home to over 60 communities of Messianic Jews, or Jewish Christians, or Jews for Jesus. The Orthodox community sees these groups as a threat, although some figures and organizations unaffiliated with Orthodox Judaism are more comfortable with their presence.<sup>29</sup>

## Endnotes

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10. Sergio DellaPergola, "World Jewish population, 2019," in Arnold Dashefsky and Ira M. Sheskin (eds.), *American Jewish Year Book 2019*, (Cham, Springer, 2020), 263-353.
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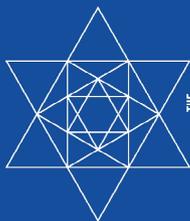
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