

# Diaspora Population: Past Growth and Present Decline

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The Jewish population of the Diaspora is currently declining. This decline stands in contrast with past expansion. We shall indicate in the following some determinants of this reversal of trends, as well as similarities and dissimilarities between modern demographic developments among the Jews and other populations.

In the course of preparing this essay, based on recent studies of mine in the demography of world Jewry,<sup>1</sup> I have had the benefit of utilizing too, with his kind permission, some research papers prepared in the past few months by Professor U.O. Schmelz.<sup>2</sup>

Due to the broad scope of our topic and to limitations of space, we shall not substantiate many of our statements by means of a

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<sup>1</sup> *The Demographic Crisis of Diaspora Jewry*. Background Paper Number 4 prepared for the President of Israel's Seminar on World Jewry and the State of Israel, Hebrew University, Jerusalem, Institute of Contemporary Jewry, 1979 (due also to appear in *Forum*, 1981, Nos. 42-43). See also *Population Trends of World Jewry*, Jewish Population Studies, No. 9, Jerusalem, Institute of Contemporary Jewry, 1976; *The Population of Israel*, Jewish Population Studies No. 11, 1978; 'A Population Policy for Israel?', *The Jewish Journal of Sociology*, December 1980. *Marriage and Fertility in Jewish Traditional Society*, lecture held in a Symposium on Demography of the Jews (Historical and Comparative Perspectives). Jerusalem, March 12, 1981 (Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities and Institute for Advanced Studies, Hebrew University).

<sup>2</sup> *World Jewish Population - Regional Estimates and Projections*. Jewish Population Studies, No. 13, Jerusalem, Institute of Contemporary Jewry, 1981; *Evolution and Projection of World Jewish Population* (in preparation). See also 'Jewish Survival: The Demographic Factors'. *American Jewish Year-Book*, 1981.

systematic apparatus of statistical data and bibliographical references. The readers are referred for these purposes to the publications quoted in footnotes (1) and (2). An additional warning is in order with regard to primary sources on which statistical data on Diaspora Jews are based. Only during the last decades of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth century, censuses, vital statistics and other official sources yielded reliable data for the majority of Diaspora Jews. After mass emigration from Eastern Europe and mainly after the Holocaust, the majority of Diaspora Jewry found itself in countries in which official statistics did not supply data on the Jews. In the years after the Second World War, the compilation of statistical estimates for Diaspora Jewry therefore became very difficult. However a considerable improvement occurred in the sixties and seventies, due to the taking of nationwide sample inquiries of the Jewish populations of countries such as the USA, France, Italy, South Africa, the Netherlands, Yugoslavia, etc.; to collection of vital statistics by Jewish institutions of some countries; and to world-wide actions for promotion, coordination and merging of statistics from various sources, undertaken by the Division of Jewish Statistics and Demography (Institute of Contemporary Jewry, Hebrew University, Jerusalem). Despite this improvement, world estimates for the Jewish population are subject to many limitations, for methodological reasons which are explained in the publications quoted in the footnotes.

#### *Recent Decline and Past Trends of Diaspora Population*

The estimates prepared by Schmelz on the world Jewish population in the decade 1970–1980 reveal the following main features. First, the probable size of the Diaspora population is much lower than the current widely accepted estimate published in the *American Jewish Yearbook*: for instance in 1975 the *Yearbook* estimate was 11,192,000 while Schmelz's estimate is only 10,200,000. This discrepancy is due mainly to the failure of the compilers of the *Yearbook* estimate to assess properly the effects of current decreasing trends of Diaspora populations. Second, in the decade between 1970 and 1980 the Diaspora population decreased by almost half a million (from some 10,242,000 in 1970 to 9,743,000 in 1980). Third, the increase of the Jewish population of Israel (from 2,582,000 in 1970 to 3,283,000 in 1980) balanced the demographic decline of the Diaspora and has even affected an increase in the total Jewish world population. This increase has been however, very small. The world Jewish population may have grown from about 12,824,000 in 1970 to 13,026,000 in 1980.

In order to see the recent decline of the Diaspora population in its historical perspective, it is worthwhile examining past trends of this population.

Despite the uncertainties mentioned above in the assessment of the size of Jewish population, we may utilize the following rough estimates in order to grasp some of its major trends:

Table 1  
*Jewish Population (in millions)*

	1800	1900	1939	1948	1970	1980
Diaspora	2.5	10.7	16.3	10.7	10.2	9.7
Israel	....	....	0.4	0.6	2.6	3.3
Total	2.5	10.7	16.7	11.3	12.8	13.0

On the basis of these estimates and other data, we may characterize as follows the demographic evolution of world Jewry in the past few centuries. At the end of the Middle Ages and in the first centuries of the modern era, the world Jewish population had a very low size, its number being presumably smaller than in certain periods during the ancient era. In contrast, it appears that during the eighteenth century and, more markedly so, during the nineteenth century, the world Jewish population passed through a phase of considerable growth. In the nineteenth century the world Jewish population evinced a natural increase far larger than that of the general population of Europe. The main source of this 'Jewish population explosion' is to be found in the high level of natural increase among the Eastern European Jews, who came to constitute the largest Jewish group. Later, the rate of natural growth of the Jewish Diaspora population slowed down: in the thirties of this century, it was already comparatively low; in the mid-fifties it was still positive but very small; in the seventies it was found to be negative. Due to this reversal of trends in natural increase, the Jewish Diaspora population has not made any long-range demographic recovery after the terrible losses incurred by the Holocaust. Net migration between the Diaspora and Israel has determined the following 'losses' to the Diaspora and 'gains' to the Jewish population of Israel:

	1919- May 15, 1948	May 15, 1948- 1954	1955-1975	1976-1980
Total	526,500	686,600	629,600	77,000
Yearly average	17,900	103,500	30,000	15,400

Immigration to the land of Israel has had an enormous importance in the re-establishment of the Jewish population in this country during the British Mandate and the first years of independence. However, despite its continuing importance from an ideological viewpoint, net immigration in recent years has had only very limited relative impact on the demographic picture of both the Diaspora and Israel.

Therefore, in the following analysis of factors behind the substantial change in the demographic trends of the Diaspora population

and its present decline, we shall not discuss effects of migratory movements between the Diaspora and Israel but will deal only with the effects of natural movements and assimilation.

### *Modern Demographic Transition of Other Populations*

In order to interpret the changes in the mortality and fertility of the Jews in modern times, it is desirable to see them in the framework of the demographic evolution of the more developed world populations (in Europe, North America, etc.). Among these populations, in the period which preceded modern evolution ('first stage'), mortality was generally high, and from time to time it reached catastrophic levels, due to epidemics, wars, famines, etc. Fertility too was high and especially so in more traditional environments. In 'normal' periods this determined sometimes positive natural increase. However, in catastrophic periods, deaths often exceeded births. On the whole, the populations tended to increase slowly and irregularly.

During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, mortality declined, particularly that of children, young people and mothers, as well as that caused by epidemics and other catastrophes. This was largely due to the combined effects of improved environmental conditions, standards of living, social and educational progress, development of both preventive and curative medical services, and scientific discoveries in the field of medicine and hygiene, etc.

During a 'second stage' in which mortality declined while fertility was still comparatively high, the excess of births over deaths grew steadily, and many populations increased at rather high rates.

During a 'third stage', the tendency to control births expanded more and more, due possibly to factors such as the prevalence of more rationalistic and secular attitudes and the weakening of traditional values in the field of reproduction; an increased proportion of women working outside the home or family farm; increased costs of child-rearing; development of modern birth-control methods, etc.

Under these circumstances the level of fertility is much lower than in the previous stages. However, it is not steady, being subject to considerable short-term variations. For instance, in the 1930s, in certain European countries fertility reached a very low level, followed by a prolonged 'baby boom'; in the last ten to fifteen years in many European countries and in North America there was again a sharp decline in fertility.

Does the 'demographic transition' described above explain the modern demographic evolution of the Jewish population in the Diaspora? The answer to this question is complex.

Almost all Diaspora communities, like other developed populations, passed through the three stages described above (high fertility and mortality; decreasing mortality and consequent high

natural increase; low fertility). However, the modern demographic evolution of Jewish populations has also contained certain peculiar traits. In the first stage, most Jews still maintained traditional Jewish demographic habits. The timing of transition, which started first in Western and Central Europe, then in Eastern Europe, and later in Muslim countries is to some extent similar and related to the timing of emancipation, 'enlightenment', assimilation, and 'modernization'. In addition, the Holocaust has had an overriding influence on the modern demographic conditions of the Jews.

### *The Demography of Traditionalist Jewish Communities*

In our discussion of peculiar Jewish traits in the demographic transition of Jewish populations, let us start by considering the conditions prevailing in the first 'pre-modern' stage. To do so, we shall discuss mainly the demographic characteristics of the largest Jewish group, that of Eastern Europe, immediately before the emancipation and assimilation movements.

For at least a part of Eastern European Jewry data are available, from various official and Jewish sources, on nuptiality, age at marriage, fertility, birth rate, deaths and natural increase. Important results are also available from an inquiry recently conducted by Princeton University on the demographic conditions of various ethnic groups, including the Jews in Russia, starting with the Tsarist census of 1897.<sup>3</sup> The interpretation of such massive material is not easy, due to methodological considerations, to incompleteness of birth registration among the Jews, and to the fact that in 1897 some Russian Jews were already well advanced in the processes of modernization and secularization.

Nevertheless, it is possible to summarize the demographic conditions of Eastern European Jews in the 'pre-modern' stage. About one hundred years ago, the great majority of this population still had demographic characteristics which can be traced to Jewish religion and tradition, such as the following: the tendency to marry was very high; the proportion of women still single at the end of the fertile period was very low; the majority of Jewish girls married young, sometimes at a very early age; the marriage age of Jewish bridegrooms was generally low; many marriages were arranged by the families, and were not love matches; widespread recourse to matchmakers and community assistance in fostering marriages helped to find mates for persons of marriageable age even when they lived in small Jewish communities scattered in isolated townlets or villages; in cases of widowhood or divorce, remarriage was frequent; marriages were strictly endogamic within the Jewish fold; births out of wedlock had low frequency;

<sup>3</sup> A.J. Coale, B. Anderson, E. Härm, *Human Fertility in Russia Since the 19th Century*, Princeton University, 1979.

generally there was little tendency to limit natural fertility in married life; childlessness was comparatively rare; Jewish women were frequently exposed to pregnancy up to the close of the menopause age; the average number of children born to a Jewish woman in Eastern Europe was presumably about seven. All these marriage and fertility characteristics are in harmony with the traditional Jewish attitude which considers marriage and family as the cornerstones of social life, procreation as a commandment and children as a blessing.

The suggestion that demographic behavior was largely connected to observance of Jewish norms on sex and family life is strengthened by the findings that at the end of the nineteenth century some basic demographic characteristics still tended to be similar for the Jews in different regions of the Tsarist empire, while they had considerable regional variability for populations belonging to other ethnic groups.

The Jews of Eastern Europe may have had comparatively high fertility already before the nineteenth century; it is conceivable too that their mortality, though still high, left a considerable margin to natural increase already in the eighteenth century and in the beginning of the nineteenth century. This increase became stronger in the course of the nineteenth century with the progressive decrease of Jewish mortality. Data available for the Russian Jews in the last decades of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth century show clearly that in Eastern Europe, as in many other regions, the modern mortality decrease began earlier and was more marked among the Jews than among the surrounding populations. All this appears to explain in a more or less satisfactory way the Jewish population explosion mentioned above.

We may ask ourselves whether in the period immediately before modern demographic transition and emancipation, the Jewish traditionalist communities of other Diaspora regions had demographic conditions similar to those of Eastern European Jews. This problem still deserves much more research and attention than have as yet been devoted to it. At first sight, the meager evidence available would suggest a partly affirmative reply with many qualifications, as will be seen from the following examples.

Let us consider first marriage and fertility in Asian and North African Jewish communities. Some marriage customs in these societies may have been influenced by local environment and contact with Muslim societies. However, demographic behavior may be assumed to have been influenced largely by Jewish traditional norms. Paradoxically, a systematic statistical check of important aspects of this behavior is possible for these communities, on the basis of very recent data provided by the Israeli census of 1961. From these data, concerning the

demographic conditions in the countries of origins of people belonging to older cohorts of immigrants, it is possible to obtain the following picture: marriage of girls at very young ages was still frequent a few decades before the census, among the Jews of countries such as Yemen, Iraq, Morocco, Iran, etc.; men also married at a comparatively young age; very few people remained unmarried; tendency to remarry was high; fertility in many communities still had natural patterns; total fertility in Iraq, Iran, Yemen, Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria averaged about seven children per woman or even more.

On the whole the picture is not very different from that found among Jewish traditionalist communities of Eastern Europe in the nineteenth century. However, in most Asian-African communities mortality declined later than in Eastern Europe; considerable natural increase also came later in these communities. The strong demographic growth of these communities was presumably short-lived, because a few decades after its main development, the majority of the Jewish population of Muslim countries emigrated to Israel, France and other countries, where their marriage and fertility habits underwent rapid changes.

With regard to *Ashkenazi* Jews in Central Europe, it appears that at the end of the Middle Ages they tended to follow traditional marriage and fertility habits; however, the custom of early marriage may have been less faithfully observed already in the seventeenth century and the traditional system of marriage started to be challenged during the Enlightenment period. In some regions, legal obstacles were enforced, limiting the number of marriages of the Jews. From the scanty statistical evidence, it would appear that already in the first part of the nineteenth century only a residue of high Jewish nuptiality and fertility may have remained in some places. During the statistical era, official data for Jews in the parts of Central Europe not bordering Eastern Europe, point to a prevalence of comparatively low nuptiality and fertility rates and, with the coming of Emancipation, to the development of intermarriage. The *Westjuden* became strikingly different in demographic behavior from the *Ostjuden*.

It has been possible to reconstruct the size of the Italian Jewish population since 1600, and, at least partially, marriage, birth and death rates for the past three hundred years. These data suggest that already in the eighteenth century nuptiality and natality rates were rather low. Only during the period of modern decline of mortality, in the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, some natural increase occurred. It is difficult to explain why the demographic behavior of the Italian Jews was so different in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries from that of Eastern European Jews. Possible explanations might be that traditional marriage and fertility habits possibly existed among Italian Jews too, but they tended to disappear at a much earlier date; harsh

physical limitations imposed on Italian Jews by ghetto life may have adversely affected their nuptiality and fertility; and conversely, despite artificial residential separation imposed by law, cultural isolation from non-Jews may have been less strong in Italy than elsewhere and may have lessened the tendency to follow special marriage patterns; and finally, specific institutions which ensured universal and young marriage among Eastern European Jews may have been less efficient in Italy.

In conclusion, up to the modern period, the two major Jewish population groups, those of Eastern Europe and Asia-Africa, followed generally traditional Jewish customs favorable to high fertility. In the first group, a combination of this and early reduction of mortality determined rapid demographic growth. In the second group, the strong growth lasted presumably for a shorter span of time. In minor Jewish groups, remnants of traditional marriage and fertility customs may have disappeared at much earlier dates.

### *Beginnings of the Demographic Crisis*

#### *Central and Western Europe*

Jewish populations in Central and Western Europe tended to differ demographically from those of Eastern Europe already in the nineteenth century or even earlier. However, the comparatively low level of mortality appears to have still ensured them some level of positive natural increase. Later, this situation changed. With the progressive assimilation of the Jews of various Central and Western European countries into the urban middle classes, the tendency to limit and delay marriage and to control fertility rapidly spread; mixed marriage became more frequent; Jewish fertility declined; an aging process of the population was set in motion; birth rates dropped and in some cases, already before the Holocaust, they were lower than the death rates.

Conversions also affected demographic conditions among the Jews of Central and Western Europe. From the statistics of some of the countries where religious conversions were registered, certain conclusions may be drawn:<sup>4</sup> the balance of conversions was negative for the Jewish religion. This determined demographic losses to the Jewish populations in countries of Central and Western Europe in the nineteenth and twentieth century. However, in normal periods, the yearly losses may have totaled no more than a few persons per thousand. A considerable number of conversions were linked to marriage with non-Jews. Conversions before marriage were mainly due to factors such as the prohibition of mixed marriage which still existed in certain countries, and the strong influence of Christianity. The number of religious

<sup>4</sup> See for instance, A. Ruppin, *Soziologie der Juden*, Berlin, Jüdischer Verlag, 1930.

conversions increased in periods of persecution and at times when anti-Semitism was at a peak; then, the demographic losses to the Jewish population were strong, as, for instance, in Hungary after the fall of the Bela Kun government (1919), and in other European countries at the beginning of the Nazi and Fascist persecutions. At that time many Jews still had the illusion of being able to escape persecution through conversion. Considerable effort made by various Christian missions for the conversion of Jews probably achieved relatively limited results.

#### *Eastern Europe*

There were both similarities and dissimilarities between developments in Eastern Europe and in Central Europe.

The first typical Jewish demographic trait which disappeared in Eastern Europe was the tendency to marry young. For instance, while in 1867-1872 sixty per cent of Jewish brides in the Russian empire were still married at twenty or younger, in 1901-1906 only twenty-four per cent were married at these ages. Thirty years later, in Poland, Jewish marriages occurred much later than those of the general population, and only three to four per cent of Jewish women married before the age of twenty. There is also statistical evidence of increasing numbers of Jewish women who did not marry at all. However, in Eastern Europe, these figures did not reach the high percentages found in the Jewish population of Central Europe.

Among Eastern European Jews, the tendency to marry within the Jewish fold remained very strong during the first decades of this century. Only after the communist revolution did mixed marriages start to occur in the USSR in considerable proportions.

Fertility among Jews decreased also in Eastern Europe; it fell to very low levels in countries such as Poland in the critical years of the thirties. However, Jewish birth rates still exceeded death rates.

#### *Consequences of Persecutions and the Holocaust*

During the Nazi era, intermarriage was prohibited in many European countries. However, Jewish nuptiality and fertility were then very low. The Holocaust was responsible not only for the loss of about two thirds of European Jewry and one third of World Jewry, but those communities that did survive were generally reduced to small numbers. It is likely that this contributed later to the increase of mixed marriages.

#### *America*

The demographic behavior of the mass immigration of Eastern European Jews to the USA was still influenced in the first decades by tradition. In particular, marriages were almost exclusively endogamous. Later, however, as Jews became assimilated into American society, their fertility decreased sharply, and it was already very low in the thirties. The increase of Jewish fertility in

the period of the 'baby boom' was strong but transitory. After that, fertility declined again.

Later, when larger numbers of second- and third-generation Americans reached marriageable age, mixed marriage increased at a rate comparable to that in Central Europe in the first generations after the Emancipation and mass assimilation.

#### *Asia and Africa*

Demographic transition started even later among the Jews of Asia and Africa. However, its effects were already strongly felt (prior to the mass emigration to Israel, France and other countries) in the communities of Asia and Africa in which the impact of European culture on the Jewish middle class was most apparent.

#### *The Present Demographic Crisis of the Diaspora*

The Jewish demographic crisis has become much more severe in the last decades. We shall briefly discuss, among its causes, mixed marriage, low fertility, aging and assimilation.

#### *Mixed Marriage*

It is impossible to summarize here the extensive and complex literature which has grown up recently around this topic. But some conclusions obtained by extensive statistical research on mixed marriages carried out by S. Della Pergola,<sup>5</sup> from which the following estimates have been taken, seem relevant (see Table 2). Mixed marriages are an important feature of the demography of all Diaspora communities. However, their frequency differs from region to region and is affected by many factors.

The highest frequencies are found in Central and Western Europe, where assimilation first began. In some of the countries of these regions half, and sometimes much more, of the Jews marry out. In the USSR and other Eastern European countries the frequency of mixed marriages is somewhat lower. It appears that the proportion of Jews who marry out in the USA and in Latin American countries may be about twenty to thirty per cent.

The proportion of mixed marriages is larger among Jewish men than among Jewish women. Generally, this proportion increases with age at marriage and it is higher in remarriages than in first marriages. It is higher in places in which the number of Jews, and especially their proportion of the population, is small. It increases with the rising level of education. The probability of intermarriage appears to be larger for children of mixed marriages, even when they are raised as Jews.

From some of the findings indicated above, we may infer that the

<sup>5</sup> 'Demographic Perspective of Mixed Marriages', *Encyclopaedia Judaica Year-book, 1975-76*, Jerusalem, Keter, pp. 198-210. *L'effect des mariages mixtes sur la natalité, etc.*, Colloque de l'Association Internationale des Demographes de langue française. Liege 1981.

Table 2  
*Rough Estimates of Proportion Mixed Per 100  
 Current Marriages of Diaspora Jews (1970-1979)*

<i>Countries</i>	<i>Mixed couples per 100 weddings involving Jews</i>	<i>Percentage marrying a non- Jewish partner, among all marrying Jews</i>	<i>Percentage of Diaspora population in these countries</i>
Germany, Scandinavia	75-84	60-72	0.6
Netherlands, Eastern Europe, (excluding USSR)	65-74	48-60	1.8
Italy, Austria Switzerland	55-64	38-47	0.7
USSR, France, Belgium	45-54	29-37	25.2
USA, Latin America (excluding Brazil)	35-44	21-28	60.7
Australia, New Zealand			
UK, Canada, Brazil, other Western European countries	25-34	14-20	8.4
South Africa	15-24	8-14	1.2
North Africa, Asia without Israel	5-14	3-8	1.4

number of mixed marriages can be expected to continue to grow, if educational levels rise further, if the dispersion of the Jews becomes wider and if the numerical size of the communities diminishes. Moreover, opinion surveys which were conducted in various places suggest that prejudice against mixed marriage is on the decrease.

The demographic consequences of mixed marriages are complex, differing from place to place and from time to time. Conversions undertaken in order to marry non-Jews were presumably more frequent in the past, in the more conservative European countries, than they are at present. Some surveys conducted in the USA show considerable proportions of conversions to Judaism of Christian women marrying Jews. Occasionally it is even suggested that this phenomenon brings demographic gains to the Jewish people. However, it is not clear whether sample surveys from which this type of data are obtained, do actually include a representative coverage of mixed marriages in which the Jewish partner converted to Christianity.

Regarding the children of mixed marriages, statistics which were collected in Central European countries in the first decades of the twentieth century indicated that the majority were raised as Christians. Possibly with the prevalence of more secular outlooks, the tendency in those countries to baptize children of mixed marriages may be less pronounced today than in the past.

However, it appears that with the possible exception of the USA, the proportion of children of mixed marriages raised as Jews is generally less than fifty per cent. For the USSR, M. Altshuler<sup>6</sup> has found that the proportion of children of mixed marriages who opt for Jewish nationality when reaching the age of sixteen varies in the different regions between seven and twenty-eight per cent.

#### *Low Fertility*

As indicated above, Jewish communities have gradually lost their traditional high fertility. Only traces of this characteristic can be found in small, very orthodox groups. The great majority of Diaspora Jews, including those of the USSR, are now to be found in world regions, urban concentrations and social classes where fertility is lower. Moreover, Jews use contraceptive methods more extensively than surrounding populations, and reduce their fertility to still lower levels.

Recent studies show that for all the Jewish communities studied, fertility is lower than that of the general population; Jewish fertility again decreased in the sixties and seventies; the average number of children per Jewish family is comparatively small; in almost all communities it does not reach the level – slightly higher than two – which is necessary in order to ensure population replacement from one generation to another. Jewish fertility in Western and Central Europe is demonstrably very low. For the Jews of the USSR no data on fertility are available, but indirect evidence indicates its low level. Apparently, the Jews in Latin America have not been influenced by the high fertility found among the general population in parts of this region. The Jews of the USA and Canada may still, a decade or so ago, have been somewhat above the replacement level, but today they are below it. Only South African Jews appear to have a level of fertility more or less sufficient for replacement.

#### *Population Aging and Excess of Deaths Over Births*

In many countries, the progressive reduction of Jewish fertility started a long time ago. This has generated another phenomenon which is common to many other developed populations, and is particularly pronounced among the Jews: the aging of the population, as shown in Table 3. The percentage of children is much lower among Jews than among the majority of world populations, while their percentage of old people is much higher. At present mortality is largely due to the aged, and as they constitute today a high proportion of the Jewish population, the crude death rate of the Jews is comparatively high. In consequence of their low fertility, their birth rate is low. A low birth rate and a high death rate cause a negative rate of natural increase.

<sup>6</sup> M. Altshuler, *The Jews of USSR: A Sociological and Demographical Analysis*. Jerusalem, Magnes Press, 1979.

Table 3  
*Age Distribution*

	<i>0-14</i>	<i>15-65</i>	<i>65+</i>	<i>Total</i>
All diaspora 1975	15.4	68.9	15.7	100
All the world population 1970	36.4	58.1	5.5	100
More developed countries 1970	26.7	63.7	9.6	100

*Assimilation*

Additional demographic losses are incurred by assimilation. On the one hand, in recent decades, formal religious conversions apart from those connected with mixed marriages, are probably less frequent than in former times. This is due to the more secular character of the countries where most Jews live, and to a presumably less acute sense of social inferiority among Jews. However, on the other hand, demographic losses are due to informal withdrawals of various types. Due to the fact that those withdrawals are informal, no current statistics on them are available and it is difficult to estimate their actual frequency.

*Prospects for the Future Diaspora and for Israel*

What can we expect in the future? No demographer can pretend to foresee with certainty future trends of Jewish Diaspora populations, because they may be connected with many uncertain political and social developments. However, within the limits in which we can suppose that long-term trends now prevailing in the Diaspora will continue to operate in the future, it seems justified to draw the following conclusions:

- (1) The percentage of mixed marriages will remain high in Europe and will increase in America.
- (2) Jewish fertility will probably be influenced even more than in the past by conditions prevailing in the societies in which Jews live. I have already indicated above that in modern times, even when the tendency to control births is very widespread, fertility has become highly variable. The opinions of the demographers on its future course in developed countries are divided.

While it is commonly agreed that there are no prospects for a widespread return to traditional high fertility, there are some demographers who consider that the very strong decrease in the last ten to fifteen years or so in Europe and North America, is only a transient one. They forecast a return to a somewhat higher fertility rate. Other demographers connect the recent drastic decrease of fertility with the weakening of the family institution taking place in Western society. This, in turn, is related to the strong emphasis being placed on the right of the individual to pursue his 'personal

fulfillment'. Additional indications of this trend are: widespread extramarital and sexual permissiveness; increasing numbers of young couples living together in a more or less provisional way, without the ceremony of marriage; increasing proportions of births out of wedlock; rapidly increasing numbers of marriages ending in divorce. There are signs indicating that some of the trends mentioned above are also penetrating into Jewish society. Jewish groups and institutions in the USA have recently shown concern about the possible inability of the Jewish family to fulfill, as in the past, the task of ensuring Jewish survival. Similarly the problem of possible future decline in the numerical size of Jewish populations in the USA and its consequences have been given some publicity.

However, it is doubtful whether awareness of such developments is really taking root and whether it will affect an appreciable change in individual behavior. There is no doubt that changes in family life, low fertility and population aging can exert a strong influence on the demographic future of American Jewry and indeed on the future of the entire Diaspora. If present trends do not change, they may over the next few decades cause a drastic decline in the size of Diaspora Jewry.

This is seen clearly from Table 4, which is excerpted from a set of projections prepared by U.O. Schmelz, on the basis of alternative hypotheses on future courses of fertility and assimilatory trends. The projection reproduced here is based on 'medium' assumptions. It shows that if current trends do not change drastically, the Diaspora population may fall below the eight million mark by the end of this century.

Table 4  
*Projection of Jewish World Population*

	1980	2000
	<i>(in thousands)</i>	
Diaspora	9,743	7,927
Israel	3,283	4,504
World	13,026	12,431
Percentage in Israel	25.2	36.2

The Jewish population of Israel is expected to continue to have, as today, only marginal proportions of out marriages; higher fertility than that of Diaspora Jews (although possibly with some decline); a milder aging process than in the Diaspora. In consequence, it is expected to continue to have an excess of births over deaths. However, this may not be sufficient to compensate for Diaspora demographic losses. Therefore the total number of world Jewry may start to decline.