

# WORLD

## JEWISH POPULATION

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#### Introduction

The world's core Jewish population, as at the beginning of 2013, is estimated at 13,854,800 (around 0.2% of the world population).

In 1939, the core Jewish population reached its highest historical peak of 17 million (0.8% of the global population). Because of events of the Holocaust, this number was reduced to 11 million in 1945. The population grew again to around 13 million by 1970s, but has since recorded near zero growth till around 2005 due to low Jewish fertility rate and assimilation.

Since 2005, the world's Jewish population began growing modestly with a rate of around 0.78% in 2013. This primarily reflects the rapid growth of Haredi and some Orthodox sectors, who are becoming a growing proportion of Jews.

The enlarged Jewish population, which includes those with Jewish parents or household, is around 18,197,400. The total number who are eligible for Israeli citizenship under the Law of Return, which includes anyone with at least one Jewish grandparent, is estimated at around 21,649,500 - of which 6,332,900 already live in Israel.

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#### Countries

Below is a list of Jewish populations in the world by country. Some numbers are given by the American Jewish Year Book 2012 and published in the Jewish Virtual Library, a comprehensive non-governmental website covering topics about U.S.-Israel relations and the Jewish people. Others numbers are given by more accurate governmental and non-governmental local census.

Country	Core Jewish Population	Proportion of country population	Enlarged Jewish Population	Proportion of country population	Law of Return population
Earth	13,854,800	0.196%	18,197,400	0.257%	21,649,500
Israel	6,014,300	75.4%	6,332,900	79.394%	6,332,900
United States	5,425,000	1.728%	8,300,000	2.644%	11,000,000
European Union	1,105,700	0.220%	1,574,300	0.313%	1,833,300
France	478,000	0.751%	600,000	0.943%	700,000
Canada	380,000	1.089%	500,000	1.433%	600,000
United Kingdom	290,000	0.459%	360,000	0.570%	400,000
Russia	190,000	0.133%	380,000	0.266%	570,000

Country	Core Jewish Population	Proportion of country population	Enlarged Jewish Population	Proportion of country population	Law of Return population
Argentina	181,500	0.445%	330,000	0.809%	350,000
Germany	118,000	0.144%	250,000	0.305%	270,000
Brazil	107,329 <sup>[7]</sup>	0.049%	125,000	0.064%	135,000
Australia	97,335 <sup>[8]</sup>	0.3% <sup>[9]</sup>	135,000	0.613%	150,000
South Africa	70,000	0.137%	80,000	0.157%	85,000
Ukraine	65,000	0.143%	130,000	0.286%	210,000
Hungary	48,000	0.485%	95,000	0.960%	150,000
Mexico	40,000	0.034%	50,000	0.043%	65,000
Belgium	30,000	0.270%	40,000	0.360%	45,000
Netherlands	29,900	0.179%	50,000	0.299%	55,000
Italy	28,100	0.046%	37,000	0.061%	40,000
Chile	18,500	0.106%	26,000	0.149%	30,000
Switzerland	17,400	0.218%	25,000	0.313%	27,000
Turkey	17,300	0.023%	21,000	0.028%	23,000
Uruguay	17,200	0.506%	25,000	0.735%	27,500
Sweden	15,000	0.158%	25,000	0.263%	27,000
Spain	12,000	0.026%	18,000	0.039%	20,000
Belarus	11,500	0.121%	23,000	0.242%	36,000
Iran	10,100	0.013%	12,000	0.015%	13,000
Panama	10,000	0.278%	11,000	0.306%	12,000
Romania	9,400	0.044%	17,000	0.080%	20,000
Venezuela	9,000	0.030%	12,000	0.040%	13,500
Austria	9,000	0.106%	15,000	0.177%	18,000
Azerbaijan	8,800	0.095%	16,000	0.173%	24,000
New Zealand	7,500	0.170%	9,000	0.204%	10,000
Denmark	6,400	0.114%	8,500	0.151%	9,500
Latvia	6,300	0.315%	12,500	0.625%	10,000
India	5,000	0.000%	7,000	0.000%	8,000
Greece	4,500	0.042%	6,000	0.056%	7,000
Uzbekistan	4,000	0.013%	8,000	0.026%	10,000
Czech Republic	3,900	0.037%	6,500	0.062%	8,000
Republic of Moldova	3,800	0.093%	7,500	0.184%	11,400
Lithuania	3,400	0.106%	6,500	0.203%	18,000
Poland	3,200	0.008%	7,500	0.019%	10,000
Kazakhstan	3,200	0.019%	6,400	0.038%	9,600

Country	Core Jewish Population	Proportion of country population	Enlarged Jewish Population	Proportion of country population	Law of Return population
Georgia	2,900	0.064%	5,800	0.128%	8,700
Slovakia	2,600	0.048%	4,500	0.083%	6,000
Costa Rica	2,500	0.056%	3,000	0.067%	3,200
Colombia	2,500	0.005%	3,000	0.006%	3,500
People's Republic of China	2,500	0.000%	3,000	0.000%	3,300
Morocco	2,400	0.007%	2,700	0.008%	2,900
Bulgaria	2,000	0.028%	6,000	0.084%	7,500
Estonia	2,000	0.154%	3,400	0.262%	5,000
Peru	1,900	0.006%	3,000	0.009%	3,500
Croatia	1,700	0.040%	3,000	0.071%	3,500
Puerto Rico	1,500	0.041%	2,000	0.055%	2,500
Serbia	1,400	0.020%	2,800	0.040%	3,000
Finland	1,300	0.024%	1,800	0.033%	2,500
Norway	1,300	0.026%	2,000	0.040%	2,500
Ireland	1,200	0.026%	1,600	0.035%	1,800
Japan	1,000	0.001%	1,400	0.001%	1,600
Guatemala	900	0.006%	1,200	0.008%	1,400
Paraguay	900	0.013%	1,500	0.022%	1,800
Tunisia	900	0.008%	1,000	0.009%	1,100
Ecuador	600	0.004%	1,000	0.007%	1,200
Luxembourg	600	0.120%	900	0.180%	1,000
Portugal	600	0.006%	1,000	0.010%	1,200
Gibraltar	600	1.935%	800	2.580%	900
Cuba	500	0.004%	1,500	0.012%	1,800
British Virgin Islands	500	0.455%	700	0.637%	800
Bolivia	500	0.005%	900	0.009%	1,000
Bosnia and Herzegovina	500	0.013%	1,000	0.026%	1,200
Kyrgyzstan	500	0.009%	1,000	0.018%	1,500
Zimbabwe	400	0.003%	600	0.005%	700
Bahamas	300	0.075%	400	0.100%	500
Singapore	300	0.006%	500	0.010%	600
Vietnam	300				
Kenya	300	0.001%	700	0.002%	800

Country	Core Jewish Population	Proportion of country population	Enlarged Jewish Population	Proportion of country population	Law of Return population
Jamaica	200	0.007%	400	0.014%	500
Netherlands Antilles	200	0.065%	400	0.130%	600
Suriname	200	0.040%	400	0.080%	500
Turkmenistan	200	0.004%	300	0.006%	500
Thailand	200	0.000%	300	0.000%	350
Yemen	200	0.001%	300	0.002%	350
French Polynesia	120				
Dominican Republic	100	0.001%	200	0.002%	300
El Salvador	100	0.002%	200	0.004%	300
Cyprus	100	0.008%	200	0.016%	250
Malta	100	0.025%	200	0.050%	250
Slovenia	100	0.005%	200	0.010%	300
Republic of Macedonia	100	0.005%	200	0.010%	250
South Korea	100	0.000%	200	0.000%	250
Philippines	100	0.000%	200	0.000%	250
Taiwan	100	0.000%	200	0.000%	250
Egypt	100	0.000%	200	0.000%	300
Ethiopia	100	0.000%	1,000	0.000%	2,000
Botswana	100	0.005%	200	0.010%	250
Democratic Republic of the Congo	100	0.000%	200	0.000%	250
Namibia	100	0.004%	200	0.008%	250
Nigeria	100	0.000%	200	0.000%	250
Fiji	60				
New Caledonia	50				
Syria	50	0.000%	200	0.000%	250
Albania	45				
Lebanon	40				
Bahrain	36				
Palau	9				
Afghanistan	1				
Other	250				

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**Appendix**  
**SEPHARDIC, ASHKENAZIC,**  
**MIZRAHI JEWS**

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**JEWISH ETHNIC DIVERSITY**

**Jewish culture:**

**The true melting pot.**

**by**

**Rabbi Rachel M. Solomin**

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**Introduction**

For most Americans, traditional Jewish culture summons up images of Passover seders with steaming bowls of matzah ball soup, black-hatted, pale-skinned Hasidic men, and Yiddish-speaking bubbes (grandmothers) and zeydes (grandfathers).

Shared Jewish history, rituals, laws, and values unify an international Jewish community. However, the divergent histories of Jewish communities and their contacts with other cultural influences distinguish Jewish ethnic groups from one another, giving each a unique way of being Jewish. Worldwide, Jews from distinct geographic regions vary greatly in their diet, language, dress, and folk customs. Most pre-modern Diaspora communities are categorized into three major ethnic groups (in Hebrew, sometimes called eidot, "communities"):

- **Ashkenazim**, the Jews of Germany and Northern France (in Hebrew, Ashkenaz)
- **Sephardim**, the Jews of Iberia (in Hebrew, Sepharad) and the Spanish diaspora
- **Mizrahim**, or Oriental Jews

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**Ashkenazim**

The Jewish ethnic identity most readily recognized by North Americans--the culture of matzah balls, black-hatted Hasidim, and Yiddish--originated in medieval Germany. Although strictly speaking, "Ashkenazim" refers to Jews of Germany, the term has come to refer more broadly to Jews from Central and Eastern Europe. Jews first reached the interior of Europe by following trade routes along waterways during the eighth and ninth centuries.

Eventually, the vast majority of Ashkenazim relocated to the Polish Commonwealth (today's Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Ukraine, and Belarus), where princes welcomed their skilled and educated workforce. The small pre-existent Polish Jewish community's customs were displaced by the Ashkenazic prayer order, customs, and Yiddish language.

Jewish life and learning thrived in north-eastern Europe. The yeshiva culture of Poland, Russia, and Lithuania produced a constant stream of new talmudic scholarship. In 18th century Germany, the Haskalah movement advocated for modernization, introducing the modern denominations and institutions of secular Jewish culture.

Although the first American Jews were Sephardic, today Ashkenazim are the most populous ethnic group in North America. The modern religious denominations developed in Ashkenazic countries, and therefore most North American synagogues use the Ashkenazic liturgy.

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## **Sephardim**

Many historical documents recount a large population of Jews in Spain during the early years of the Common Era. Their cultural distinctiveness is characterized in Roman writings as a "corrupting" influence. Later, with the arrival of Christianity, Jewish legal authorities became worried about assimilation and maintaining Jewish identity. Despite these concerns, by the seventh century Sephardim had flourished, beginning a time known as the "Golden Age of Spain."

During this period, Sephardic Jews reached the highest echelons of secular government and the military. Many Jews gained renown in non-Jewish circles as poets, scholars, and physicians. New forms of Hebrew poetry arose, and talmudic and halakhic study took on great sophistication.

Ladino, the Judeo-Spanish language, unified Jews throughout the peninsula in daily life, ritual, and song. Ladino, a blend of medieval Spanish with significant loan words from Hebrew, Arabic, and Portuguese, had both a formal, literary dialect, and numerous daily, spoken dialects which evolved during the immigrations of Sephardic Jews to new lands.

The Sephardic Golden Age ended when Christian princes consolidated their kingdoms and re-established Christian rule throughout Spain and Portugal. In 1492, King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella expelled all Jews from Spain; soon after, a similar law exiled Jews from Portugal. Sephardim immigrated to Amsterdam, North Africa, and the Middle East.

Others established new communities in the Americas or converted publicly to Christianity, sometimes secretly maintaining a Jewish life. These converts (known in Ladino as conversos and in Hebrew as anusim, forced converts) often maintained their Judaism in secret. In the 21st century, there are still people in both Europe and the Americas who are discovering and reclaiming their Jewish ancestry.

Wherever Sephardim travelled, they brought with them their unique ritual customs (minhagim), language, arts, and architecture. Sephardic synagogues often retain the influence of Islam in their architecture by favouring geometric, calligraphic, and floral decorative motifs. Although they may align with the Ashkenazic religious denominations (usually Orthodoxy), the denominational identity of Sephardic synagogues is, in most cases, less strong than their ethnic identity.

At home, Ladino songs convey family traditions at the Shabbat table, although Ladino is rapidly disappearing from daily use. Sephardic Jews often maintain unique holiday customs, such as a seder for Rosh Hashanah that includes a series of special foods eaten as omens for a good new Year and the eating of rice and legumes on Passover.

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## **Mizrahim**

Although often confused with Sephardim (because they share many religious customs), Mizrahim have a separate heritage. Mizrahi (in Hebrew, "Eastern" or "Oriental") Jews come from Middle Eastern ancestry. Their earliest communities date from Late Antiquity, and the oldest and largest of these communities were in modern Iraq (Babylonia), Iran (Persia), and Yemen.

Today, most Mizrahi Jews live either in Israel or the United States. In their new homes, Mizrahim are more likely than other Jews to maintain particularly strong ties with others from their family's nation of

origin. Thus, it is not uncommon to find a specifically Persian or Bukharan synagogue. Likewise, Mizrahim are not united by a single Jewish language; each subgroup spoke its own tongue.

The unique Mizrahi culture has penetrated Israeli mainstream society in recent years. Yemenite music entered the pop scene with Ofra Haza, who blended traditional instruments, rhythms, and lyrics with modern flair. Yemenite silversmiths create sacred objects used by Jews of all backgrounds. "Mizrahi" restaurants--where large platters of skewered meat and breads and bowl upon bowl of salads and condiments are shared by a group--have become fashionable gathering places in Israel.

Despite these trends, Jewish ethnic barriers remain strong. In Israel, Ashkenazic Jews still dominate leadership roles in public institutions. For much of Israel's history, Sephardim and Mizrahim were disproportionately underrepresented in the government. Yet now, they make up more than half of the population.

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### **Jewish Diversity Still Matters**

Many Jews today live a multi-layered Jewish existence. Ethiopian Jews attend Hasidic yeshivot, and Sephardim serve matzah ball soup at their Passover seders. Jews from all backgrounds often borrow each other's cultural traditions. Many populous Jewish communities have a diverse range of ethnicities, and that diversity presents itself even within individual families.

Though some of these cultural divides have healed--partially due to the increase in marriages among members of different ethnic groups--ethnicity is still highly relevant in Israeli society. For example, the public school curriculum over-represents Ashkenazic cultural achievements and history. At least one study recently reported that Mizrahim are still half as likely to attend universities as Ashkenazim.

Massive economic disparities exist among different eidot, since Mizrahi immigrants frequently were brought to Israel by emergency airlifts, arriving with minimal property or wealth. Partially as a way to combat these discrepancies, Israeli political parties are often formed along ethnic lines, such as Shas (Sephardic), Agudas Israel (Ashkenazic), and Atid Ehad (Ethiopian Jews).

Some Jews protect their ethnic identity in other ways. Religious Jews will follow the minhagim of their ancestors in both their homes and synagogues. Others consciously study their traditional Jewish language, whether Yiddish, Ladino, or Farsi and join social clubs based on their ethnic heritage. In North America, where secular schools often celebrate multiculturalism, Jewish supplemental and day schools have begun to include Jewish ethnic diversity in their curricula. Indeed Jewish ethnicity becomes a way to trace the course of Jewish history.

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