The population of Israel
1990-2009
Demographic characteristics
At the end of 2009 Israel had a population of 7.6 million (the population in September 2010 is estimated provisionally at 7.7 million). Assuming a medium fertility rate and migration balance, by the end of 2030 the population is projected to reach 10 million - more than double the number in 1990 (4.8 million).

Israel’s population grew by 133,000 inhabitants in 2009, equivalent to a growth rate of 1.8%, compared to a rate of 5.7% in 1990. The Jewish population rose by 1.7% (95,000 persons) and the Arab population by 2.4% (36,000 persons).

The two main components of population growth are natural increase (births minus deaths) and international migration balance (inflow from immigration and family reunifications minus outflow from emigration). In the Arab sector, the population growth derives almost entirely from natural increase. Among the Jewish population, the proportion of each of the growth components varies over the years as a function of changes in the volume of immigration. During 1990-1995, in which a yearly average of 114,000 immigrants arrived in Israel and the international migration balance averaged 90,000 individuals per year, the latter component accounted for 65% of the total growth. During 2006-2009, in which an average of 16,000 immigrants arrived per year, the international migration balance accounted for only 13% of the total growth.

Between 1990 and 2009 approximately 1.25 million people immigrated to Israel, about 80% of them from the former Soviet Union. In 2009, immigrants from the FSU accounted for 45% of the total immigrant population.

The population of Israel comprises approximately one-thousandth of the world population. It is nearly identical in size to the population of Switzerland (7.7 million in 2009), and greater than the population of several European countries, such as Denmark (5.5 million), Finland (5.3 million), Norway (4.8 million) and Ireland (4.4 million). Israel’s population growth rate, though slower in recent years, remains higher than in other Western countries, where the growth approaches zero or may even be negative (e.g. Italy and Germany).

Note: In this brochure, the “others” category is not presented separately in the data by population groups, and the “unclassified” category is not presented separately in the data by religious groups (see explanations on the next page).
In 2009, out of the total Israeli population, 75.5% were Jews (5.7 million), 20.3% were Arabs (1.5 million) and 4.1% were defined as others (0.3 million). Of those defined as others, 90% are individuals without a religious classification in the population registry, and the rest are non-Arab Christians. The population of others hails almost entirely from the former Soviet Union.

The share of Moslems in the Arab population rose from 78% in 1990 to 84% in 2009, while that of Christians declined from 13% to 8%. The percentage of Druze remained unchanged at 8%.

The proportion of Israeli-born persons in the total Jewish population rose from 62% in 1990 to 71% in 2009.

Jews in Israel account for 42% (in 1990 - 30%) of the total world Jewish population, which is estimated* at 13.4 million.

Israel has a younger population than other Western countries and a slower aging rate, due to higher fertility. Children (ages 0-14) comprise 28% of Israel’s population - twice as high as in Germany, Italy and Japan. Persons aged 65 and over make up 10% of the Israeli population - one-half their percentage in those three countries. The pyramid of the population of Israel by age (Graph 5) widens downward along with the decrease in age, indicating an increase in the number of newborns over the years. In the graph for Switzerland, which has the same population as Israel, the pyramid tapers toward its base, consistent with the decline in fertility over the past decades.

The proportion of children (ages 0-14) in the Jewish population is 26%, compared to 38% in the Arab population; the proportion of those aged 65 and over is 12% and 4%, respectively.

In the Jewish population, overall there are more women than men (2,890,000 and 2,814,000, respectively). In the Arab population there are fewer women than men (759,000 and 776,000, respectively). The ratio between the sexes in the general population is similar to that in the Jewish population.

* By the Division for Demography and Sociology of the Jews at the Institute of Contemporary Jewry, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.
Marriage and fertility

- 32,000 couples were married in Israel in 1990, and in 2008 - 50,000.
- Between 1990 and 2008 the average age at marriage of men marrying for the first time rose from 26.3 to 27.5, and that of women - from 23.2 to 24.7.
- As a result, the percentage of single people increased in the younger age groups. For example, among young women in the 20-24 age group, the share of single women climbed from 56% to 71% (among Jewish women - from 62% to 78%, and among Moslem women – from 35% to 41%).
- Despite the rise in marriage age in Israel, it is uncommon for people to remain permanently single - 92% of those aged 40-44, both women and men, were married at least once.
- Age at first marriage is lower in Israel than in other Western countries. In comparison with Germany, for example, age at first marriage (of both brides and grooms) is lower in Israel by more than five years.

The number of live births in Israel increased from 103,000 in 1990 to 161,000 in 2009.
- In 2009 the total fertility rate (the expected average number of children born by a woman in her lifetime) in Israel was the same as in 1990 and in 2000. However, this similarity masks the different developments that occurred during this period in the fertility rates of Jewish and Arab women: slightly increasing for Jewish women and significantly decreasing for Arab women. Thus, the average number of children of a Moslem woman decreased from 4.7 to 3.7 (since the year 2000), and of a Druze woman - from 4.1 to 2.5.

The total fertility rate in Israel is the highest in all Western countries. For the sake of comparison, the average total fertility rate in the OECD countries is 1.7, lower than the number of children (2.1) needed to maintain a stable population.
Mortality

- In 2009, approximately 39,000 people died in Israel, of whom 80% were aged 65 and over. In 1990 there were 29,000 deaths.
- In 2009 male life expectancy in Israel amounted to 79.7 years and female life expectancy amounted to 83.5 years. During the past two decades, life expectancy of both men and women has increased by almost four years, though to a greater extent in the Jewish population than in the Arab population.

• One of the reasons for the lower life expectancy of the Arab population, compared to the Jewish population, is a higher infant mortality rate. In 2009 there were 7.1 deaths of Arab infants per 1,000 live births, compared to 2.7 deaths of Jewish infants.
• The infant mortality rate in Israel fell from 9.9 in 1990 to 3.8 in 2009.
• In a comparison of life expectancy in Israel and the OECD countries in 2008, Israeli men are placed high (79.1 years). Their life expectancy is only 0.7 years shorter than that of men in top-ranked Switzerland. Only four other countries outranked Israel, just slightly: Iceland, Japan, Australia and Italy. In contrast, the life expectancy of Israeli women in 2008 (83 years) was lower than the female life expectancy in 11 countries, and the difference compared to Japan, the leader, was more than three years. Nevertheless, Israeli women have a longer life expectancy than women in the U.S., Belgium, Denmark, the Netherlands, the U.K. and other countries.
• Between 1990 and 2008 there was a significant drop in mortality rates from heart diseases and cerebrovascular diseases (continuing the sharp drop since the 1970s), and a slight downturn in mortality rates from cancer. Thus, the mortality rate (net of age differences) from ischemic heart diseases fell in these years from 93 to 37 per 100,000 residents and that of cerebrovascular diseases - from 40 to 15 per 100,000 residents, while the mortality rate from cancer declined to 98 from 110 per 100,000 residents.
• Following the decrease in mortality rates from heart diseases, these diseases are no longer the primary cause of death. In the late 1990s they became the second most prevalent cause, with cancer taking over the lead. The share of deaths from diabetes doubled, making this disease the third most common cause of death.
Israel is divided into six districts and the Judea and Samaria area. Until the early 1990s the Tel Aviv District had the highest number of residents, but it has since been overtaken by the Central District, which in 2009 had 1.8 million residents (24% of the total population of Israel).

Between 1990 and 2009 the Southern District nearly doubled its population, becoming the fourth largest district (sixth in 1990).

24% of the Jewish population lives in the Northern and Southern Districts, compared to 56% of the Arab population.

Israel is among the world’s most densely populated countries, with a population density in 2009 of 329 residents per square kilometer (in 1990 - 220 residents per square kilometer). Among the European countries, only the Netherlands (392 residents per square kilometer in 2008) and Belgium (351) have a higher population density. The most densely populated district is the Tel Aviv District, with 7,425 residents per square kilometer, and the least populated is the Southern District, with 76 residents per square kilometer.

Until the year 2000 there were three cities in Israel with a population of over 200,000 each: Jerusalem, Tel Aviv-Yafo and Haifa. Since then, Rishon LeZiyyon, Ashdod and Petach Tikva have been added to the list.

The three main factors causing change in the geographical distribution are: differential natural increase, differential international migration balance and differential internal migration balance in the different geographical areas. Thus, for example, in 2009 natural increase in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv-Yafo was higher than the overall growth, while in Haifa it was lower.

There is an interrelationship between the different growth components. For instance, following the wave of immigration in the 1990s, the rate of those changing their home address (internal migration) rose, only to fall again when this wave subsided.
Households and families

- The number of households in Israel increased from 1.2 million in 1990 to 2.1 million in 2009.
- The average number of persons per household decreased in this period from 3.64 to 3.36 - the proportion of households with three persons rose (from 50% to 57%), while that of households with five persons or more dropped (from 32% to 26%). The smaller size of households reflects the growth in the proportion of young singles living outside their parents' home, the rise in divorce rates, a longer life expectancy along with an increase in the number of widowed persons, the drop in fertility rates among Arabs and the massive immigration from the former Soviet republics which are characterized by smaller households.
- The number of single-person households has doubled since 1990, reaching 374,000, of which 90% are Jews; 60% are women; and 45% are persons aged 65 and over. The proportion of these households in Tel Aviv-Yafo (38%) is more than twice the national average (18%) and also more than twice their percentage in Jerusalem (17%). The rate of single-person households in Haifa is 26%.
- Among the younger ages, the percentage of men living alone (out of all men) is higher compared to women, although the difference is not great. At older ages, the percentage of women living alone is considerably higher than that of men living on their own.

- In Israel there are 1.75 million families, with an average of 3.8 persons per family - 3.5 persons in a Jewish family, and 4.9 persons in an Arab family.
- The average number of children aged 0-17 in families with at least one child in that age group is 2.4 - in a Jewish family 2.3, and in an Arab family 2.9.
- 46% of Jewish families and 71% of Arab families consist of a couple and at least one child aged 0-17.

- The number of couples in Israel is 1.5 million, of which 4% are unmarried. The highest percentage of couples cohabiting without marriage occurs in the 25-29 age group (12% of all men living with a female partner and 9% of all women living with a male partner). By way of comparison, the rate in the 35-39 age group is 3% for both men and women.
- Among parents in single-parent families with at least one child in the 0-17 age group, women account for 91% and men for 9%. 57% of mothers and 52% of fathers in single-parent families are divorced, and 10% of mothers and 31% of fathers are widowed.
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* In the CBS web site.