jpr / European Jewish Demography Unit

Jewish migration today: What it may mean for Europe

Dr Daniel Staetsky

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/ Introduction

The image of the wandering Jew is one that has persisted for centuries. But, unlike many of the images that have attached themselves to the Jewish population over the millennia, this one has some basis in fact.

On the whole, Jews in the Western world are more likely than the wider population to be born outside the country in which they are resident. In Spain, Germany, Denmark, Austria and Australia, between 40% and 60% of Jews are foreign-born, compared with between 10% and 30% of the general population. In France, Belgium and Sweden, the proportion of Jews born elsewhere ranges between 25% and 35%, while between 10% and 20% of the broader population was born overseas. In the UK, Canada, the Netherlands and Italy, between 15% and 30% of Jews were born elsewhere ranges, compared with between 10% and 25% of the broader population. In the USA, the difference is less stark: 10% of Jews were born in another country, compared with 15% of the wider population.[1] These ranges are largely rounded for readability, and the precise figures matter less than the message that they convey.[2] After the Holocaust, Europe received Jews from North Africa, North and South America, and Israel. Internal movement of Jews inside Europe also took place and helped some Jewish communities to grow, most notably in Germany. Yet, in the global picture of Jewish migration, Europe's role throughout the twentieth century and up until now was that of an 'exporter' of Jews. The Jewish population of Europe declined dramatically from 3.8 million in 1945 to 1.3 million in 2022[3] and emigration accounted for a significant part of this decline. Over 2 million Jews left Europe for Israel alone between 1948 and the end of 2021.[4]

Jewish communities are shaped by immigration. The image of the wandering-Jew has often been used pejoratively: Jews were the original citizens of nowhere. But, in fact, the high rates of immigration among the Jewish population means that Jews are likely to have an understanding of – and connection to – the culture and languages of societies beyond the one in which they currently live. Migration has a special role to play in the formation of Jewish communities. A comprehensive view of Jewish migration across history and the world has been captured in several academic analyses to date.[5] Whilst distant demographic history is not our primary concern here, its elements provide the background for the more specific inquiry in this paper.

This paper explores a question about the here and now: *are Jews leaving Europe?* Although the only means of answering this question credibly is demographic, identifying early signs of mass departure has much broader implications, across political and policy decision-making. The legacy of World War Two is such that it is not unusual for Jews across the diaspora to ask themselves of developing political situations: "How close is what's happening now to what happened in Germany in the 1930s?" In 21st Century synagogues, at communal events, over Shabbat tables, some Jews still ask themselves: "How might we know if a full-scale persecution of Jews is imminent? Can we ever be completely sure that it won't happen again?" Hindsight, obviously, is perfect, but it has yet to prove an effective tool at preventing political disasters. However, perhaps examining migration behaviour can help to convert hindsight into foresight.

Throughout history, the mass movement of Jews has often preceded – and therefore predicted – full-scale political or economic crises. Conspiracy theorists may use this to point to some secret knowledge harboured by Jews for their own nefarious ends. But a much more prosaic and realistic explanation is that, collectively and individually, Jews assess the external situation on a day-to-day basis and decide that it is too precarious to stay. This is done by weighing up the countless small daily interactions and observations of political and economic life that come from simply living as Jews, and that are difficult to discern even by the most sophisticated analyst. Jews process these observations and take the decision, as family units or as individuals, to sacrifice their assets and the certainty of the familiar and a known environment in order to move to a different country. In their assessment, the costs associated with the move may appear large, but they shrink in comparison with the potentially disastrous costs of staying.

Jews weighing up whether to stay or go in the early stages of a crisis can therefore watch the trends of Jewish migration and use them to predict how bad things are likely to become. And those living elsewhere – in Israel and across the Diaspora – can interpret these trends as a warning sign for future, more intense waves of Jewish migration. This can help them to prepare the scale of assistance needed. Beyond the Jewish community, any mass migration of Jews sends out a powerful signal to their non-Jewish compatriots: when Jews start leaving, a wider storm may well be coming.

This paper is not the first time that the question 'are Jews leaving Europe?' has been addressed from an integrated demographic and policy perspective. A 2017 Institute for Jewish Policy Research publication also did so.[6] At the time it was put together, European Jewish populations were sending mixed signals. In some places, most notably France, emigration had reached historically unprecedented levels. In others, such as the United Kingdom, levels were normal. But nowhere, at that time, had emigration reached the critical benchmarks that indicated any kind of major 'exodus' was occurring. However, since that time, there have been several new developments both in Europe and the wider world, and in light of these, it is worth considering the question again.

A lot happened in Europe as it transitioned from the 2010s to the 2020s. As indicators of political stability maintained by the World Bank testify (a topic we will return to shortly), political instability and risks of political violence in Europe either grew or remained relatively high over this period.[7] The same is true of popular concerns regarding the impact of immigration from outside Europe and the subsequent increase in ethnic and religious diversity in Europe. Several works of fiction and political polemics have captured part of the mood, notably *Submission* by Michael Houllebecq, published in France in 2015, *Germany abolishes itself* by Thilo Sarazzin, published in Germany in 2010, and *The strange death of Europe: immigration, identity and Islam*, by Douglas Murray, published in the United Kingdom in 2017. Right-wing political parties continue to be on the rise, or stable in several places, most remarkably in France, Italy, Sweden, Hungary and Poland.[8] The Brexit referendum in the UK in 2016, which was propelled by concerns about sovereignty and the scope of immigration, ultimately resulted in the country's withdrawal from the European Union in 2020. Around the same time, the UK also experienced a temporary rise of the far-left with the instalment of Jeremy Corbyn as leader of the Opposition from 2015-2020, representing a hardline socialist and anti-Zionist faction within the Labour Party. Corbyn's programme was supported by about a third of Labour voters.[9] In addition, the global coronavirus pandemic in 2020-2021 brought unprecedented disruption of economic and social life, and the hostilities between Russia and Ukraine, and the wider tensions between Russia and the NATO block, began to stir with annexation of Crimea by Russia in 2014 and increased dramatically with the subsequent eruption of the war in 2022. It is no accident that the editors of the Collins English Dictionary declared "permacrisis" to be their word of the year for 2022, defined as an "an extended period of instability and insecurity."[10]

But what might all this mean for Jews? Surveys of Jewish people's experiences and perceptions of antisemitism, conducted by a JPR/Ipsos team for the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) in Europe in 2012 and 2018, did not register significant change in the scope or nature of antisemitic harassment or violence experienced by Jews, but they did clearly register high and growing levels of anxiety among Jews. Just to give an idea about the level and trajectory of the Jewish mood in Europe: in 2018, 73% of Jews in Italy (a minimal observed level) and 95% of Jews in France (a maximal level) said that they thought antisemitism to be a problem in their country. On average, across six out of seven communities surveyed at two points in time, in 2012 and 2018, the prevalence of an opinion that antisemitism is a problem grew by 10%-25%. The share of Jews thinking of emigrating grew or remained stable in five out of seven countries examined.[11] How might we understand stability in levels of antisemitic victimisation on the one hand, alongside growing anxiety about antisemitism among Jews, on the other? There is not, at present, a ready method of settling this question. Contradictory messages sent by these two types of statistics are genuinely puzzling. Further, neither surveys of non-Jews' opinions of Jews nor antisemitic incident statistics are helpful in making sense of it. The former mostly show stability in antisemitic sentiment for the past quarter of the century, especially in the West. The latter have not been designed to measure the trajectory in antisemitic incidents reliably: methods of recording of such incidents change all the time, usually in the direction of better coverage, yet trends still cannot be accurately charted. For that, stable and consistent recording is needed.[12]

The bottom line is that in such an atmosphere of 'permacrisis,' the state of anti-Jewish sentiment appears to be very difficult to determine accurately and, as a consequence, risks to Jews are not reliably assessable. In such circumstances, examining patterns of Jewish emigration, a more unambiguous indicator of a crisis, becomes an imperative. It has the potential to tell us more about the gravity of the situation compared to other, presently rather uncertain, measures of security of Jews living in the Diaspora. Such is the ambition of this report.

This paper covers 15 European countries, accounting for 94% of all European Jews. It draws on resources accumulated by the European Jewish Demography Unit at JPR. In the four years of its operation, the Unit has collected a significant amount of demographic data from Jewish communities and across Europe more broadly and has consolidated its understanding of the migration behaviour of European Jews. The report also draws on a rich database of migration data, maintained by the Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics/CBS.[13] This database, holding information that goes back to the founding of the State of Israel in 1948, records migration to Israel in detail, according to country of origin and other characteristics. Combining these various sources allows us to reach a level of insight into the role of Jewish migration to and from Europe that we do not believe has been attainable previously.

/ Migration patterns of European Jews since the mid-1980s: an overview

Demographic statistics on births and deaths are generally very reliable in Western societies because of the biological and largely unambiguous nature of these events. But migration is a social act, and that makes it much harder to capture and document well. The act of crossing a country border should, in theory, be sufficient to determine a migrant's status. However, in reality, not all migrants declare themselves as such at the border. In fact, some never do, and there is no way to backdate their status after a long stay. For others, migration may be unplanned and unanticipated, following a sudden change in circumstance. Capturing the migration of specific groups, such as Jews, is doubly difficult. Migrant-registration processes rarely capture the ethnicity or religion of the migrants.

It is for this reason that we do not have comprehensive statistics on the number of Jews arriving in and leaving Europe. We do, however, possess a detailed picture of migration of Jews to Israel. This is because in Israel, unusually, migration status is a well-defined administrative fact. At border control and in the statistical system, there are provisions for recording and classifying migrants, and for accounting for them in the national system of population statistics. This is very helpful to demographers for two reasons. Firstly, the migration of Jews to Israel is of interest in and of itself. Most Jews who migrate from Europe (about two-thirds), go to Israel.[14] Secondly, although migration to Israel only accounts for part of the overall migration of Diaspora Jews, its patterns – its ups and downs and general trajectory – reflect the overall readiness of Jews to leave the countries in which they are currently living.

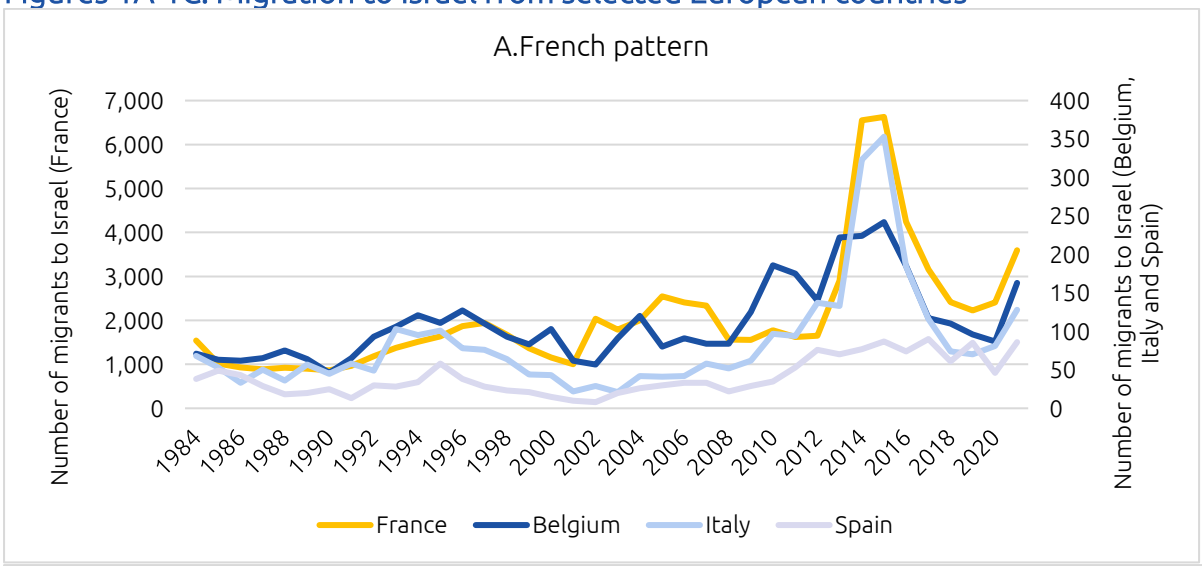
Two aspects of Jewish migration from Europe to Israel are of particular interest here: the trend and the volume. The aforementioned previous study we conducted of patterns in European Jewish migration (2017) suggested two ideal types of migration to Israel: what we termed the 'French pattern' and the 'British pattern'. Although these patterns were first identified in 2017 using data that ended in 2015,[15] they are still relevant today. Analysis of data extending to 2021 confirms that these patterns continue (Figure 1, Panels A and B, overleaf). We have also added here a third pattern – the 'Eastern European pattern' – which has unique properties of its own (Figure 1, Panel C, overleaf).

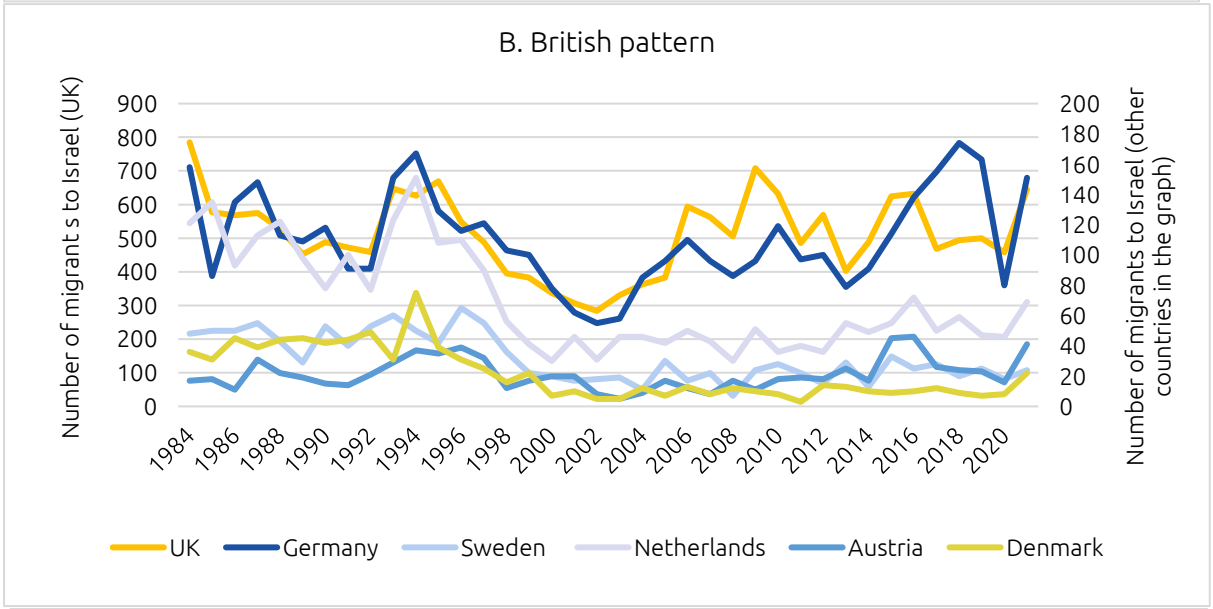
The 'French' pattern, also observed in Belgium, Italy and Spain, is characterised by a strong surge in immigration to Israel that started somewhere around 2011 (more precisely, in the years from 2010 to 2014). At some point in each case, the absolute number of migrants almost doubled from one year to the next. In subsequent years, the numbers either increased further or stayed at the new high point. Such high levels of Jewish migration from these countries to Israel had rarely been seen before – or, in some cases, were completely unprecedented. In France and Italy, in particular, the surge at this time exceeded the surges of the late 1940s, after the establishment of the State of Israel, and the late 1960s, in the aftermath of the Six-Day War. In France, Belgium and Italy, the number of migrants peaked in 2014-2015. After that, it declined slightly. But levels of migration have not sunk all the way back to previous, pre-surge levels. In Spain, the surge is still ongoing: levels of migration remain high. In all countries following the French pattern, a surge has been going on for about a decade.

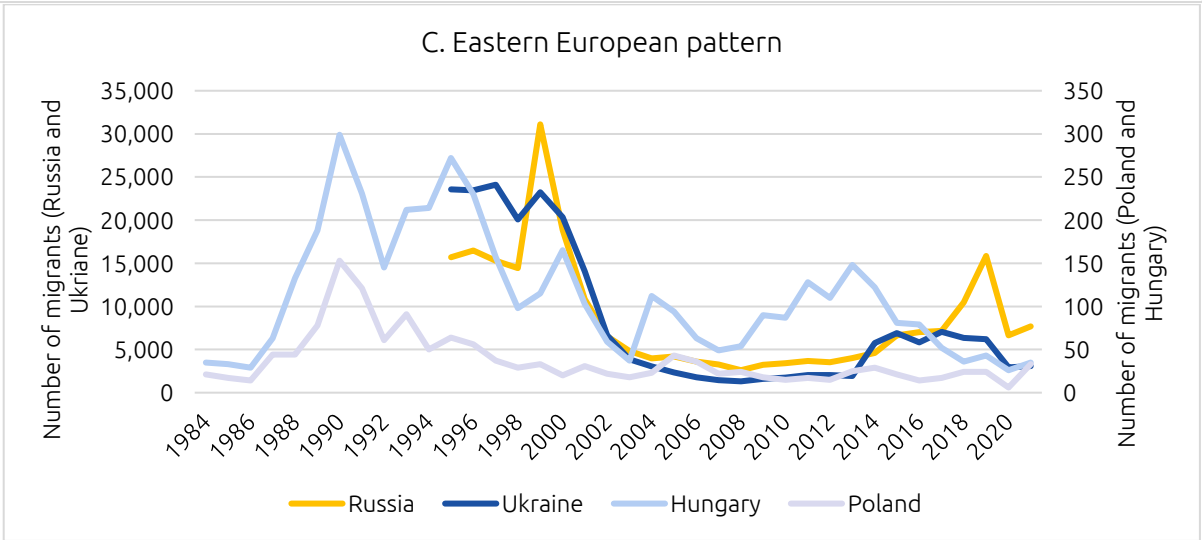
The British pattern, meanwhile, stands in direct contrast to the French one. In this pattern, levels of migration remain relatively stable. This is particularly true in the UK, Austria and Germany. Alternatively, there has been some decline in the level of migration over the observed period, with migration eventually settling at a new, lower level. This is true in Sweden, Denmark and the Netherlands.

What accounts for these differing patterns? Largely, the answer is economic forces. Political factors, such as political instability, social unrest and violence, contribute to the patterns, too – but they do not define them exclusively. We have drawn these conclusions from detailed analysis of the correlation between the number of Jewish immigrants arriving in Israel, on the one hand, and the levels of unemployment (both in Israel and in countries of immigrants' origin) and of political instability in Europe, on the other. Unemployment is a major indicator of the state of the economy, and data about it is routinely collected by the statistical agencies of different countries. Several indicators of the quality of governance, accountability and political stability have been developed over the last quarter of a century; they are held by the analytical units of international organisations, such as the World Bank.[16]

Figures 1A-1C. Migration to Israel from selected European countries







Note: (1) Portugal fits into the British pattern. It is not presented, because of low numbers and in order to avoid cluttering. (2) Country is defined as the last country of residence before immigration to Israel. (3) Numbers exclude citizen-immigrants, i.e. returning children born abroad to Israeli citizens.
Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, Israel.

These indicators, when examined alongside immigration figures, tell a coherent story: when economic conditions deteriorate and unemployment rises, Jews react by considering the option of emigrating to Israel, and indeed, by deciding to take it up. The worse the economy in their country of origin, the lower the cost of migration seems. If economic conditions in Israel appear to be favourable in comparison, then emigration to Israel becomes an especially attractive option. The impact of political instability on migration is less easy to demonstrate, but it does exist, and is more easily seen in some places than in others.

Let us look more closely at the specific patterns. The French pattern tends to affect countries with chronically high levels of unemployment: the annual level of unemployment in the countries affected by this pattern stood between an average of 7.5% and 16.0% between 1996 and 2021. By contrast, countries that follow the British pattern tend to have lower levels of unemployment: an average of between 5% and 7% over the same period. Moreover, between 2011 and 2018, all countries following the French pattern experienced a surge in unemployment – in France, Italy and Spain, the levels reached double digits. In Spain, the surge was particularly severe: it was lengthy, and unemployment levels rose above 20% in some years. During this same period, unemployment in Israel was very low. In addition, Israel introduced changes in taxation in 2008, which were particularly favourable to new immigrants.[17] It is therefore easy to see how living in Israel suddenly appeared to be very attractive to Jews in European countries affected by the economic crisis. And, indeed, this period – between 2011 and 2018 – was exactly when there was a surge in immigration to Israel from those countries following the French pattern. By contrast, those countries following the British pattern – with its stable or declining emigration – experienced only short-lived or low-level unemployment. There were no instances of unemployment reaching double digits.

However, political instability, *independently of unemployment and alongside it*, exercised a significant influence on Jewish migration from France. Indicators of political instability and levels of violence, recorded by the World Bank, have shown a deterioration in the political situation across Western Europe as a whole, not just in France. In 1996, for example, Germany was one of the most stable and safe countries in the world – 92% of countries were less safe and stable than it. By 2021, however, only 70% of countries were less safe than Germany – a significant deterioration. Similar trends could be observed in Austria, Belgium, the Netherlands and Denmark. Meanwhile, in 1996, 77% of all countries were less safe than France, but by 2021, only 57% of countries were in this position – France had moved notably downwards. Jewish migration could be linked to the deterioration, but this trend was not repeated elsewhere in the West. In other words, political instability increased in Western Europe in general – and in particular in countries containing large Jewish populations – yet our analysis confirms that France was the only place in Western Europe where trends in Jewish migration reflected this development, which was almost certainly influenced by a series of terrorist attacks directed specifically against Jewish targets in France. However, in the UK, for example, the former Labour Party leader, Jeremy Corbyn, was widely seen as openly hostile to Jewish concerns, yet no surge in migration from the UK to Israel was observed. The same is true of Brexit – undoubtedly a political crisis, but it did not lead to a surge in Jewish migration. The French case remains unique to date.

Purely visually, the Eastern European pattern is the opposite of the French pattern. All countries show long-term decline in levels of Jewish migration. But the very high levels of migration seen in Eastern Europe in the 1990s reflect the huge wave of Jewish immigration that followed the fall of the Soviet Union in late 1991 and the collapse of communism in Soviet satellites. On average, between 16,000 and 20,000 Jewish migrants came to Israel from each of Russia and Ukraine per annum in the period between 1995 to 2003. This wave of migration had exhausted itself by the early 2000s: only about 3,000-4,000 Jewish migrants per year came to Israel from Russia between 2003 to 2013, and about 2,000 per year came from Ukraine. The annual number of migrants from Poland and Hungary during this period were mostly counted in tens, rather than hundreds. This is still the case in Poland and Hungary.

In Russia and Ukraine, however, new political developments over the last eight years have clearly manifested themselves in patterns of migration. In Ukraine, the number of Jewish migrants in 2014 was three times the number in 2013. A further rise, with migration figures stabilising at this new, higher level, was observed in later years. In Russia, a similar rise in migration took place in 2015, though it was more moderate in scope than in Ukraine. But migration numbers in Russia continued to rise. The outbreak of the Covid pandemic in 2020 obscures the picture somewhat, but in 2019 (pre-pandemic) and 2021 (largely post-pandemic), the numbers of migrants from Ukraine and Russia was at a level last seen in the late 1990s and early 2000s, during the major post-Soviet migration surge. Given the timing and the sharpness of this increase in Jewish migration, it can be unambiguously linked to the start of Russo-Ukrainian hostilities and, more particularly, to the annexation of Crimea by Russia. Interestingly, measures of political stability and violence maintained by the World Bank show that political stability *inside Russia* actually increased during the period from 2014 to 2021. (In Ukraine, by contrast, political stability declined sharply from 2014). The upward trend in Jewish migration from Russia from 2014-21 is a specific response to the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, rather than to internal Russian developments in political stability.

So, distinct patterns of Jewish migration from Europe exist, and are shaped by economic realities and political instability. Today, as ever, prospects of a better life and the promise of greater safety impel Jews to move from one place to another.

/ A Jewish 'exodus': the historical perspective

Several instances of mass Jewish migration have taken place since historical records began. Three are recent and well-documented: (1) the mass migration of Jews following the rise of the Nazi regime in Germany in 1933; (2) the wave of migration following the political liberalisation and eventual dissolution of the Soviet Union in the late 1980s to the early 1990s; and (3) the mass migration of Jews from the countries of North Africa in the 1950s and 1960s, following the retreat of colonial powers, the establishment of independent Arab states and the foundation of the modern State of Israel.

The exact nature of the forces driving Jews out was very different in each of these three cases. In Germany, Nazi ideology had been developing since the early 1920s, gradually affecting the public mindset as well as state structures. This process was assisted by the global economic crisis of the 1930s and the dynamics of German political life at the time. When Hitler became Chancellor of Germany in 1933, this signalled to German Jews that Nazism was becoming a serious political force, capable of destroying Jewish property, livelihoods and families. About 500,000 Jews were counted in the 1933 German census: 0.8% of the total population of Germany at that point.[18] Between 1933 and 1939, 250,000 Jews left Germany: about half of the German Jewish population.[19] The essentials of this narrative are numerically summarised in Table 1 overleaf, alongside similar quantifications of the exodus of Soviet Jews in the 1990s and of North African Jews during the 1960s.

The exodus from the Soviet Union differs from the mass departures from Germany, in that there was no palpable, clearly defined threat to Jews. During the years leading up to and following the collapse of the USSR – from 1989 onwards – political liberalisation was followed by economic deterioration and political destabilisation. In this atmosphere of radical social and political change, rising prices and new opportunities for freedom of movement, several ethnic groups – Jews, as well as ethnic Germans and Greeks – began to leave the countries of the former Soviet Union. The 1989 Soviet Census[20] counted almost one and a half million Jews: approximately 0.5% of the total population. In the seven years from 1989 to 1995, about 53% of Soviet Jews emigrated. More than two thirds of these migrants went to Israel; the rest largely to the USA and Germany.[21]

Table 1. Jewish migrants leaving within a time span of seven/ten years, as a proportion of the total Jewish population in each country

	Germany 1933-1939 (7 years)	(Former) Soviet Union 1989-1995 (7 years)	Morocco and Tunisia 1960-1969 (10 years)	Algeria 1960-1969 (10 years)
No. of Jews at beginning of period	503,000	1,480,000	265,000	130,000
Estimated no. of Jewish migrants during the period	250,000	790,000	192,000	98,000
Percentage of migrants out of initial number *	50%	53%	72%	75%

Sources: detailed sources appear in the endnotes of this section.
Note. Because of the way it is calculated, % of migrants is better understood not as a percentage but as a ratio of the number of migrants in a given period to some initial number, expressed per 100.

For comparison, it is worth looking at the ethnic Greek and German populations of the Soviet Union. In 1989, there were 360,000 ethnic Greeks living in the Soviet Union. About 31% of these left for Greece between 1989 and 1995.[22] An unknown number of Greeks left for other destinations. Meanwhile, of the two million ethnic Germans living in the Soviet Union at the time of its collapse, around 56% left for Germany.[23] The exodus of Jews from the former Soviet Union, therefore, was part of a pattern of ethnic groups reacting to the collapse of the Soviet empire by leaving for an ancestral homeland that was ready to receive and accommodate them – and, to a lesser degree, for an existing diaspora community outside the Soviet Union.

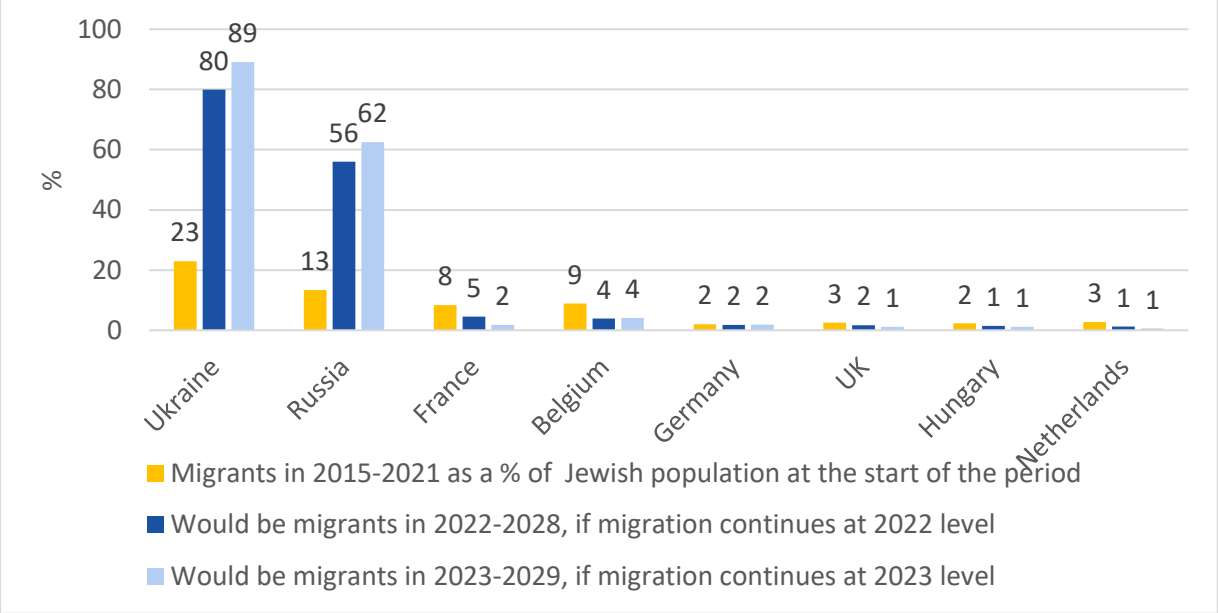
In the 1950s and 1960s, the Jewish communities of North Africa were significantly reduced in size by mass migration – to the point of extinction in some cases. This followed periods of political unrest in North Africa and great uncertainty about the region's future, following the final withdrawal of Western colonial powers and the establishment of independent states. The movement of North African Jews was reliably documented as the statistical authority of the State of Israel keeps meticulous records of immigration. Subsequent research into the topic also documented migration streams of Jews from North Africa to destinations other than Israel. In the period from 1960 to 1969, more than 70% of Jews in these countries left Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia for Israel and elsewhere.[24] Many Jews from these communities had already left during 1950s; we merely choose to highlight the 1960s because of the quality and consistency of data available.

At the time that these waves of migration were taking place, few people had a clear sense of the significance of the political developments around them. This is understandable. The scale of historical events is easier seen from a distance. How does one measure the seriousness of a certain political development while it is still in progress? Perhaps the level of migratory movements – of Jews and others – offers a clue. Repeatedly through history, whenever a radical social, political or economic change is looking likely, Jews – and minorities in general – react by emigrating. This is true even when the full meaning of events is not yet discernible for contemporary spectators. Jews do not have a particular insight into the meaning of events around them. Like everybody else, they only appreciate the true significance of events in hindsight. However, they have transnational networks and focuses of attachment outside their current locations. They are therefore able to make use of these links when their own risk assessment leads them to believe that leaving will be more beneficial – or at least less costly in social, political and economic terms – than staying.

Thus the examples offer us some guidance to consider contemporary realities. If somewhere between 50% and 75% of Jews, and probably some other minorities, leave a country within a timespan of seven to ten years, it can be considered a sign of a serious crisis. The full meaning and scale of that crisis may not be evident at the time, but the movement of minority communities may provide an indication of its seriousness. Jewish and minority communities, as well as national governments and policymakers, can benefit from this insight. This quantification equips us with a degree of predictive capacity. If we can gauge the annual figures relating to Jewish migration during the build-up to a crisis, then one does not have to wait for the period of seven to ten years to elapse.

Armed with these insights, we can now ask: is there a Jewish 'exodus' from Europe taking place at the moment? Figure 2 suggests the answer to this question. Between 2015 and 2021, nowhere in Europe – including France, Russia and Ukraine – did Jewish migration reach the critical value signalling the beginning of a mass exodus. It is worth noting migration from Russia and Ukraine had already intensified during this period, as a result of political tension between the two countries.

Figure 2. Relationship between number of Jewish migrants in a 7-year period and initial number of Jews in a given country, as observed in 2015-2021, 2022 and 2023



Sources: (1) Jewish population figures for the calculation of the ratio of 2015-2021 migrants relate to 1 January 2016 and are taken from: DellaPergola, S. 2016, 'World Jewish population, 2016.' Current Jewish Population Reports 17, reprinted from American Jewish Yearbook 2016. (2) Jewish population figures for the calculation of the ratio of 2022-2028 would-be migrants relate to 1 January 2021 and were received from Sergio DellaPergola in personal communication. (3) Data on migration to Israel up to 2021 come from Central Bureau of Statistics, Israel. (4) For all countries except Russia and Ukraine, migration of Jews to countries other than Israel is estimated on the basis of the 2018 survey of European Jews conducted by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (GESIS Data Archive, Cologne, ZA7491). For Russia and Ukraine, estimation was based on: Tolts, M. 2018. 'Post-Soviet Jewish demographic dynamics: an analysis of recent data,' in S. DellaPergola, U. Rebhun (eds.), *Jewish Population and Identity*. Cham: Springer. (5) Estimates of the number of migrants in 2022 have been built from the data on immigration to Israel in January-November 2022 published by the Central Bureau of Statistics, Israel, in the Monthly Bulletin of Statistics-December 2022. A preliminary estimate of the number of migrants in 2023 has been created on the basis of the data on immigration to Israel in January-April 2023 published by the Central Bureau of Statistics, Israel, in the Monthly Bulletin of Statistics-May 2023.
Note: (1) Only immigrants recognised as Jews in the Israeli administrative system are taken into account. (2) Numbers of immigrants to Israel, used in estimation, include citizen-immigrants, i.e. returning children born abroad to Israeli citizens.

However, for Russian and Ukrainian Jews, 2022 was a watershed year: the number of migrants to Israel that year was five times higher than in 2021. Similarly high levels of migration persisted in early 2023. If migration from these countries continues for seven years at the level seen in 2022 and early 2023, then the critical value indicating an ongoing exodus will be reached and, arguably, surpassed. At that point, 80%-90% of the Jewish population of Ukraine will have emigrated, and 50%-60% of the Jewish population of Russia (numbers rounded for readability). By contrast, if the emigration of French Jews continued at its current rates for the next seven years, France would lose only 2%-5% of its Jewish population – very far from a critical value. The other countries of Western Europe, as well as Hungary, would be even further from any critical migration loss.

/ Conclusions

It has long been suspected that migration is draining Europe of its Jews. The most obvious other candidate explanation for the decline in Europe's Jewish population in recent decades is a negative balance of births and deaths, a topic that we will explore in a forthcoming follow-up paper. Here we have been more focused on understanding current patterns of migration and how they compare to key historical precedents. To put it differently: our aim has not been to determine whether or not migration drains European Jewish population, but rather to consider what signal current levels of Jewish migration from Europe send about the political realities perceived and experienced by European Jews.

We have shown that, historically, the migration of European Jews follows certain patterns. There are countries, such as the UK and Germany, where the rate of migration has been stable for almost forty years. Elsewhere – for example, in France and Belgium – there have been increases in migration over the past twenty years. In Eastern Europe – and Russia and Ukraine in particular – there have been increases in migration even more recently. Such patterns are proven to be driven by the states of the economy and national security. Like all other emigrants, Jews tend to leave their homes for safer and more prosperous alternatives. However, while economic factors have influenced the decision of Jews to emigrate in all the countries covered by this research, only in France, Russia and Ukraine were safety and security concerns statistically discernible in the migration data.

What do these findings mean for policy? First, many European Jewish populations show signs of numerical change. Such change – sometimes growth and often decline – typically requires changes in communal infrastructure: expansion or contraction, depending on the nature of the change. For example, the numbers of pupils in Jewish schools, or making use of elderly care facilities, or indeed using various services across the community, may change. It is important to chart and verify the direction of these developments, so that changes in provision can be aligned with changes in numbers. It is also important to understand the precise roles of migration and other factors, such as the balance of births and deaths, in driving such changes, an issue that is very much part of JPR's agenda, and that we will explore in a follow-up paper.

Second, we have compared recent Jewish migration to certain historical benchmarks. Mass movement of Jews has been associated with large-scale – and at times catastrophic – political and economic changes. This is so much the case that we maintain that one can use the mass movement of Jews as an early predictive sign of coming changes. The last time that Europe witnessed a mass relocation of Jews was when the Soviet Union collapsed. Then, about 50% of Soviet Jews left the former Soviet Union in the space of seven years. A similar exodus of Jews happened following the rise of the Nazi regime in Germany in the 1930s, and during the transition to independence of several countries in North Africa during the 1950s and 1960s. All of these relocations were on a similar scale, which allows us in hindsight to define the scale

as 'critical': indicative of a major social and political transformation, affecting Jews and non-Jews alike.

In the early years of the 21st century, France, Russia and Ukraine have all seen waves of out-migration of Jews to Israel and other destinations. Although these appeared to be large waves of migration, none reached the critical threshold up to the end of 2021; even the annexation of Crimea by Russia did not precipitate a major exodus of Jews. However, in 2022, hostilities between Russia and Ukraine progressed to full-scale war, and in that year, the signs of such an exodus were all there. Writing in mid-2023, and judging by the scale of Jewish migration from Russia and Ukraine so far, we can say that there are ominous signs of a major – possibly catastrophic – political crisis in Europe.

/ Appendix

Analyses reported here aim at identifying associations between the volume of Jewish migration from a given country and (1) economic forces and (2) the state of political stability and safety in that country. The state of the economy is observed by looking at the level of unemployment. Data on unemployment (percentage of the labour force unemployed) comes from the Our World in Data depository. Data on political stability comes from the depository of the World Governance indicators – this provides a score showing the position of a country's political stability and the absence of violence or terrorism relative to other countries. A country's score is the percentage of countries in the world with a *lower* score on political stability and absence of violence. Therefore, the higher the score, the better the state of political stability.

As a first stage of analysis for each country in our study, we explored the association between the number of immigrants to Israel and each of the independent variables (level of unemployment and level of political stability) by fitting curves. This analysis identified the strongest associations: those showing the highest proportions of explained variance in the dependent variable (Panel A, circa 30%, highlighted in yellow). Then independent variables with the strongest associations with the number of migrants were put simultaneously into a multiple regression. Panel B reports the results: those variables that remained significant in regression analysis, with a proportion of explained variance in the dependent variable. We experimented with the lagged versions of the independent variables, to allow for the possibility of a delay in reaction to new economic and political situations. Migration to Israel was positively associated with the level of unemployment in the source countries: the higher the unemployment, the higher the migration; and it was negatively associated with the level of unemployment in Israel: the higher the unemployment in Israel, the lower the migration. In certain countries, migration also was associated with a level of political instability: as expected, decrease in political stability was associated with an increase in migration to Israel.

Table A1. Results of curve fitting and regression analysis: selected countries belonging to the British pattern

A. Curve estimations, United Kingdom, 1996-2021		B. Linear regression	
Factor	R squared of linear function	R squared	Significant variables
UK security	0.08	0.29	Unemployment in Israel
UK security lagged	0.26		
Israel security	0.01		
Israel security lagged	0.04		
UK unemployment	0.08		
UK unemployment lagged	0.01		
Israel unemployment	0.29		
Israel unemployment lagged	0.27		
A. Curve estimations, Netherlands, 1996-2021		**B. Linear regression**	
Factor	**R squared of linear function**	**R squared**	**Significant variables**
Netherlands security	0.046	0.24	Unemployment in Netherlands
Netherlands security lagged	0		
Israel security	0.009		
Israel security lagged	0.021		
Netherlands unemployment	0.175		
Netherlands unemployment lagged	0.239		
Israel unemployment	0.046		
Israel unemployment lagged	0.169		

Table A2. Results of curve fitting and regression analysis: selected countries belonging to the French pattern

A. Curve estimations, France, 1996-2021		B. Linear regression	
Factor	R squared of linear function	R squared	Significant variables
France security	0.299	0.3	Security in France Unemployment in Israel
France security lagged	0.165		
Israel security	0.002		
Israel security lagged	0.019		
France unemployment	0.008		
France unemployment lagged	0.001		
Israel unemployment	0.256		
Israel unemployment lagged	0.216		
A. Curve estimations, Belgium, 1996-2021		B. Linear regression	
Factor	R squared of linear function	R squared	Significant variables
Belgium security	0.077	0.27	Unemployment in Israel
Belgium security lagged	0.044		
Israel security	0		
Israel security lagged	0.022		
Belgium unemployment	0.095		
Belgium unemployment lagged	0.052		
Israel unemployment	0.266		
Israel unemployment lagged	0.206		
A. Curve estimations, Italy, 1996-2021		B. Linear regression	
Factor	R squared of linear function	R squared	Significant variables
Italy security	0.08	0.45	Unemployment in Israel Unemployment in Italy
Italy security lagged	0.094		
Israel security	0.008		
Israel security lagged	0.006		
Italy unemployment	0.265		
Italy unemployment lagged	0.182		
Israel unemployment	0.382		
Israel unemployment lagged	0.287		

/ About the Institute for Jewish Policy Research (JPR)

The Institute for Jewish Policy Research (JPR) is a London-based research organisation, consultancy and think-tank. It aims to advance the prospects of Jewish communities in the United Kingdom and across Europe by conducting research and informing policy development in dialogue with those best placed to influence Jewish life positively. Web: www.jpr.org.uk.

/ About the European Jewish Demography Unit

JPR conducts research on Jews all over Europe. Among our facilities is a specialist unit dedicated to generating data about the fundamentals of European Jewish life – key statistics that allow community leaders and policymakers to understand the demographic structure of Jewish populations, determine whether they are projected to grow, decline or remain stable, and make sense of the factors underpinning any changes foreseen.

/ Author

Dr Daniel Staetsky is a Senior Research Fellow at JPR and Director of its European Jewish Demography Unit. His expertise spans the disciplines of demography, applied statistics and economics, and he is a former researcher and analyst at the Central Bureau of Statistics in Israel and at RAND Europe. He holds an MA in demography from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and a PhD in social statistics from the University of Southampton. He specialises in Jewish, European, Israeli and Middle Eastern demography. His work in demography has been widely published, and he focuses particularly on the major puzzles of contemporary demography, such as relatively high Jewish longevity, divergence of longevity paths between different Western countries and stagnating fertility in the context of the developing world. He has authored and co-authored thirty-five manuscripts covering the topics of demography, survey methodology, social statistics and the quantitative study of antisemitism.

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Published by Institute for Jewish Policy Research
6 Greenland Place
London NW1 0AP, UK

+44 (0)20 7424 9265
jpr@jpr.org.uk
www.jpr.org.uk

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/ Notes

[1] Sources: (1) European countries, including the United Kingdom: 2018 FRA survey of discrimination and hate crime against Jews in the EU (GESIS Data Archive, Cologne, ZA7491). (2) United States of America: The 2020 Pew Research Center Survey of Jewish Americans. (3) Canada: Brym, R. 2022. 'What the 2021 census reveals about Canada's Jewish community.' *Canadian Jewish News*, December 6, 2022. (4) Australia: Graham, D. and Markus, A. 2018. *GEN17 Australian Jewish Community Survey: preliminary findings*. Australian Centre for Jewish Civilisation and JCA.

[2] It is worth noting, however, that the proportion of the overall population that is foreign-born is consistently in double digits. Almost 30% of Switzerland's population was born elsewhere, while in Germany, Austria, Belgium, Sweden, Ireland and Iceland, foreign-born residents make up close to 20% of the population. In France and much of the rest of Southern and Northern Europe, that figure largely falls within the range of 10% to 15%. In fact, the populations of Western European countries tend now to resemble those countries more traditionally thought of as being made up of immigrant populations: the USA has a foreign-born population of 14%, Israel has 21%, Canada has 24% and Australia has 29%. By contrast, immigration figures in Eastern Europe are much lower. The legacy of the Soviet era, coupled with an underdeveloped economy, means that Eastern Europe remains primarily an exporter of population.
Sources: (1) European countries, except the United Kingdom: Eurostat. 2022. Eurostat Statistics Explained: Migration and migrant population statistics. Data refer to 1 Jan 2022. (2) United States of America: US Census Bureau. American Community Survey 2021, Table SO501. Selected characteristics of the native and foreign-born populations. (3) Canada: Statistics Canada. 2017. Number and proportion of foreign-born population in Canada, 1871 to 2036. The data are projections from 2016 (last year with the known data) to 2021. (4) Australia: Australian Bureau of Statistics. 2022. Australia's population by country of birth: statistics on Australia's estimated resident population by country of birth. Data refer to 2021. (5) United Kingdom: office for National Statistics. 2022. International migration, England and Wales: Census 2021. (6) Israel: Central Bureau of Statistics. 2022. Statistical Abstract of Israel. Table 2.6. Data refer to Jewish population in 2021.

[3] See: (1) DellaPergola, S. 1993. Jews in the European community: sociodemographic trends and challenges. *American Jewish Year Book* 1993. (2) DellaPergola, S. 2023. World Jewish population, 2022. *American Jewish Year Book* 2022. Cham: Springer, 2023. (3) DellaPergola, S. 2020. Jews in Europe at the turn of the millennium: population trends and estimates. London: Institute for Jewish Policy Research. (4) Pew Research Center. 2015. The continuing decline of Europe's Jewish population.

[4] Central Bureau of Statistics, Israel. 2022. Statistical Abstract of Israel 73. Table 2.55.

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[6] Staetsky, L. Daniel. 2017. *Are Jews leaving Europe?* London: Institute for Jewish Policy Research.

[7] World Development Indicators | DataBank (worldbank.org).

[8] Pew Research Center. 2022. Populists in Europe – especially those on the right – have increased their vote shares in recent elections.

[9] Author's analysis of the YouGov Poll of 1,404 Labour voters in Britain, October 2016.

[10] Why a global recession is inevitable in 2023 (economist.com)

[11] Surveys of European Jews by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights were conducted in 2012 and 2018. The Jewish populations of Denmark, France, Belgium, Hungary, Sweden, United Kingdom and Italy were surveyed on both occasions. See: European Union Agency for Fundamental

Rights. 2018. Experiences and perceptions of antisemitism: second survey on discrimination and hate crime against Jews in the EU. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.
[12] Staetsky, Daniel. 2023. Is antisemitism increasing? Presentation at the workshop ' New directions in antisemitism research', Oslo, 25-26 May 2023.
[13] We gratefully acknowledge Marina Sheps's role in the preparation of all data on migration to Israel. Currently serving as a Director of Migration Division the Department of Demography and Census, CBS, Sheps advised extensively on data properties and carried out several methodological inquiries that proved fundamental for understanding migration realities of Jews in full.
[14] Source: 2018 survey of discrimination and hate crime against Jews in the EU conducted by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (GESIS Data Archive, Cologne, ZA7491).
[15] Staetsky, L. Daniel. 2017. *Are Jews leaving Europe?* London: Institute for Jewish Policy Research.
[16] A detailed account of the study of associations is given in the Appendix.
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