

Executive Summary - Israel and the Palestinian Territories

Israel and the Palestinian Territories comprise the 10,278 square miles between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River. With a total population of 10.0 million in 2002, the population density was more than 900 people per square mile.

Population Overview

Israel shares borders with Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and the Palestinian Territories. In 2002, it had 6.6 million inhabitants (roughly the population of Massachusetts) over an area of 7,815 square miles (slightly smaller than New Jersey). About 5.3 million people (80.1%) are Jews and the other 1.3 million people are primarily Arabs. Of the Arab population, 82 percent are Muslim, 9 percent are Christian and 9 percent are Druze. These numbers include approximately 180,000 Israelis living in the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem.

The Palestinian Territories, comprised of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, operate under a transitional government. In 2002 they had a population of 3.4 million people. About one-third of the population lived in the Gaza Strip (slightly larger than Delaware), while the remainder lived in the West Bank (twice the size of Washington, DC).

Jews currently make up just over half of the population of the region, but due to high birth rates, Arabs will become a clear majority within twenty years. In 2020, the region will be home to about 6.4 million Jews and 8.5 million Arabs.

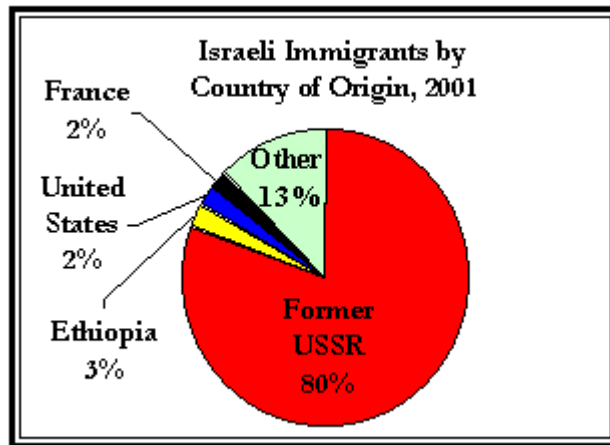
By 2050, the Palestinian Territories are projected to have approximately 11.2 million individuals, compared with Israel's 11.0 million.

Population Growth: Fertility Rates versus Immigration

Within Israel, Arabs are an increasing proportion of the population. The Arab population doubled over the past 20 years, reaching 1.2 million in 2001. The Jewish population grew from under 3.3 million to 5 million, a 67 percent increase due primarily to immigration.

In the 1990s, nearly one million Jews immigrated to Israel, a large majority of them from the former Soviet Union. In 1996, just over 60 percent of the Israeli population was Israel-born. Israel continues to encourage Jewish immigration; it expected about 45,000 individuals in 2001.





Source: The Jerusalem Post

In 2002, the total fertility rate (TFR) in Palestine of 5.9 children per woman was more than twice as high as in Israel (2.9), which is reflected in their respective rates of natural increase (3.5% annually versus 1.5%). The TFR in the Gaza Strip was one of the highest in the world at 6.6 births per woman (2001). Similar trends can be seen within Israel: Jewish women have a TFR of 2.6 compared with 4.7 for Muslim women (2001).

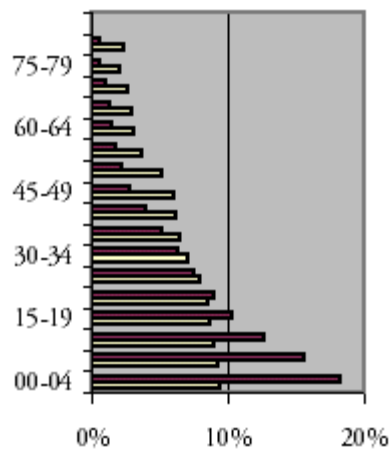
Health

The health status of Israelis is much higher than that of Palestinians. For example, life expectancy in 2001 was 71 years in the Gaza Strip and 72 in the West Bank, compared with 78 in Israel.

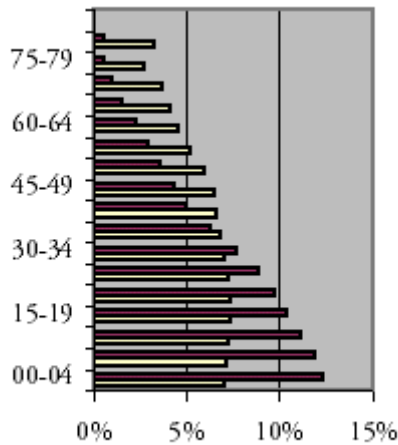
In 2001, mortality rates were higher in the Palestinian Territories than in Israel, four versus six deaths per 1,000 population, respectively. This is due to the radically different age structures resulting from the different levels of fertility. While 28 percent of Israel's population is under 15 years of age, almost half of the Palestinian population is under 15.

Palestinian infant mortality rates, at 26 deaths per 1,000 live births, are almost five times higher than those of Israel, 5.3 deaths per 1,000 live births.

Age Structure: Israel and the Palestinian Territories 2000



2050



■ Israel ■ The Palestinian Territories

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Labor and Education

Palestinians were most likely to be employed in services (66%) and industry (21%), while Israelis tended to work in a wider range of sectors, led by services (31.2%), manufacturing (20.2%) and finance and business (13.1%). Unemployment in 2001 was extremely high in the West Bank and Gaza Strip (26%), while nine percent of Israelis were unemployed.

The per capita Gross Domestic Product in Israel, at \$20,000, was much higher than in either the Gaza Strip (\$625) or the West Bank (\$1,000) in 2001.

The school enrollment rate for children aged 6-17 years in the Palestinian Territories was 85.1 percent in 1998. Enrollment rates in Israel are higher; 95 percent of school-aged Israelis were enrolled in primary education facilities.

This executive summary was updated by prepared by the Population Resource Center in February of 2003 and reviewed by Dr. Charles Westoff of Princeton University. Sources include the U.S. Bureau of the Census, the CIA World Factbook 2001 and the Population Reference Bureau. For further information, please contact the Center at (202) 467-5030, 1725 K Street, NW, Suite 1102, Washington, D.C. 20006, prc@prcdc.org; or (609) 452-2822, 15 Roszel Road, Princeton, NJ 08540, prc@prcnj.org.