

VOICE קול

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Jews in Croatia

What the Latest Research Reveals

How many Jews are there in the world? Where are they located? Where do they go and where do they come from? How many among them are elderly and how many young? etc. - these are the questions repeatedly asked not merely by expert demographers but also by politicians, sociologists, economists, genetic engineers and even by racists. Renowned Jewish demographers conclude with concern that we are increasingly growing old whereas the youth doesn't care too much for their Jewish roots; yet each Jewish community that has self-esteem calculates and researches its population.

Researching the Jewish population is quite a difficult task as we are dealing with a dynamic and constantly changing category of population. Some criteria are applicable to the research of any population (e.g. the proportion between the birth and the death rate) and some are specific exclusively for the Jewish population, as is the issue of personal or collective identification with being Jewish. In Israel, the issue of who is considered as Jewish does not depend on personal identification, which is frequent in Diaspora but on legal and Rabbi solutions and decisions (halacha)

The census on Croatian population after World War II does not show the accurate number of Jewish people, partly due to the census methodology but also because of the Jewish experience in World War II.

The number of Jewish people who are members of Jewish Communities (that differs from the data in the population census) is also inaccurate as there are Jews who are

not members of their Communities as well as non-Jews - spouses from mixed marriages - who are members of Communities.

Thus according to the first population census after World War II in ex-Yugoslavia in 1948, there were 6.853 Jews and, at the same time, 11.934 members of Jewish Communities.

The number of Jews in population census in Croatia after World War II

Year	1953	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001
By nationality	413	406	2.845	316	600	576
By religion	1.011	-	-	-	633	-

In order to obtain the insight into the development of a certain population, it is recommendable to follow it through a longer period of time.

We decided to compare the data on the age structure of surviving Zagreb Jews from 1946 with the data obtained through the research (survey) in 1995 and 2005 in Zagreb (Chart 1).

After the Holocaust

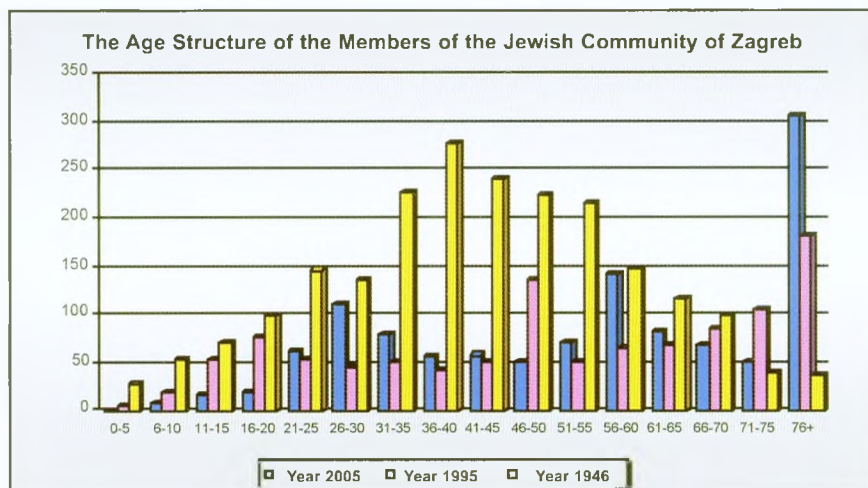
The 1946 data (marked in the Chart 1 in lighter yellow) refers to those Jews who came to Zagreb after the Holocaust and were recorded in evidence. From the total of 2.170 Jews, only 1.222 (or 10% of previous population) originated from Zagreb. Not all Jews returned back then;

some remained in other countries and a part of them returned later.

According to preliminary data from the computer database of Research and Documentation Centre in Zagreb (still in progress), 6.215 Zagreb Jews were murdered (3.359 men and 2.856 women).

It is estimated that 6 million Jews perished in the Holocaust. Since the time immediately following the

Chart 1



Renowned Jewish demographers abroad conclude with concern that we are increasingly growing old whereas the youth doesn't care too much for their Jewish roots; yet each Jewish community that has self-esteem - ours included - counts and investigates its population.

Holocaust, when there were 11 million Jews, the Jewish population has experienced a slight growth and in recent years it experiences zero population growth.

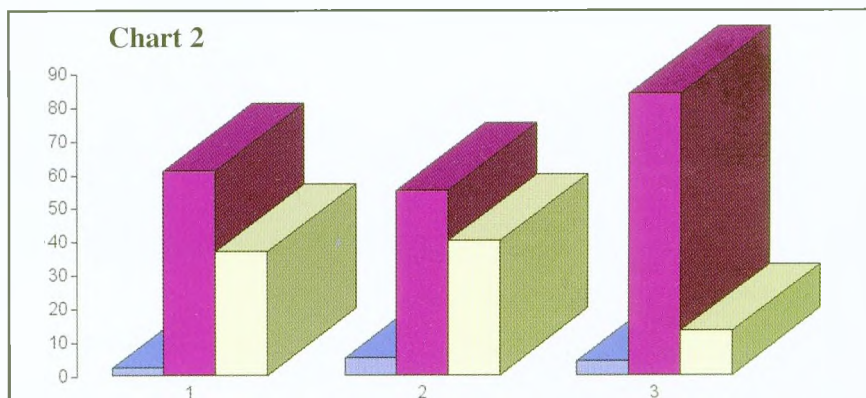
When making the comparison between the Jewish and the general population in Croatia after World War II, we also have to point out to differences that were usually overseen until now.

The difference between the losses among the Croatian population in World War II (that was researched to a great and detailed extent) and the losses among the Jewish population lies in the fact that during the war some categories and age groups of population were more prone to losses (e.g. the male population of certain age span) than the rest of the (civil) population. The Holocaust was total genocide; a massive slaughter regardless of sex, age, profession, birthplace or origin. The Jewish population of Croatia, numbering almost 25.000 in 1941, was almost entirely obliterated.

This has caused great disturbance in the post-war age structure of Jews and subsequently produced the so-called "truncated" generations, which may be followed through a long period of time.

One may notice the disturbance among certain age groups in the displayed age structure (Chart 1) of Zagreb Jewish population, noticeable also in Chart 2.

The differences are particularly manifest in the age group between 15 and 64 (dark columns), representing the so-called work-fit population, as well as among the population over 65 (light columns).



	2005 (1)		1995 (2)		1941 (3)	
Age	Number of Jews	%	Number of Jews	%	Number of Jews	%
0-14	24	2%	56	5%	330	4%
15-64	718	61%	605	55%	7179	84%
65+	440	37%	432	40%	1083	13%
Total	1182		1093		8592	

When we compare the same age group of Jewish population and the general population in Croatia, great differences are manifest, especially among the youngest and the oldest age group. Thus the 1991 census shows that there was 19,4% of children between 0 and 14 years in the general population of Croatia, whereas there was only 6,3% in the Jewish population. The difference exists also in the age group between 15 and 64 (Croatia 67,5%, Jews 49,3%) and especially among those over 65 (Croatia 13,1%, Jews 43,0%).

Jewish demographers now warn of the deficit among the young Jewish group in the population census (in Diaspora) being caused by the fact that one part of children from Jewish mixed marriages (increasingly growing in the world) doesn't identify themselves as Jewish anymore.

This warning however cannot apply entirely to our Jewish population

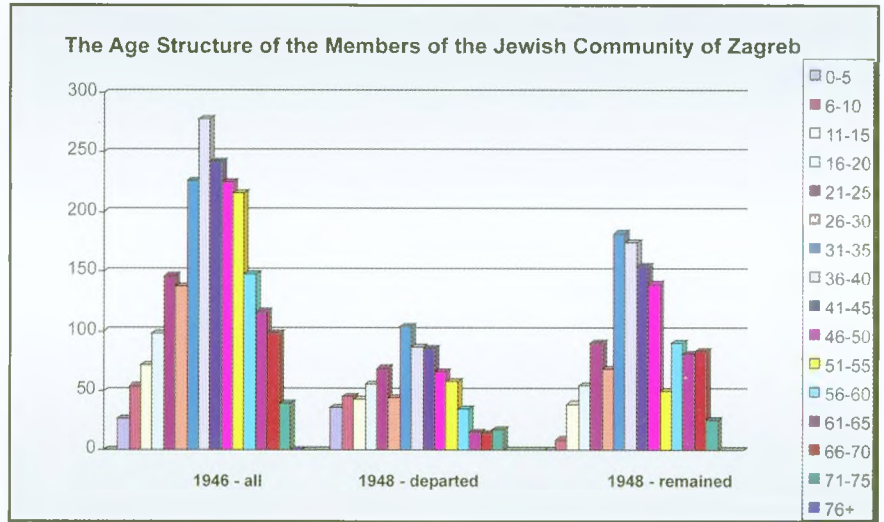
as our Jewish Communities accept all children from mixed marriages regardless of their Jewish maternal or paternal origin. It is precisely this young generation that identifies with their Jewish roots.

Migrations

The Jewish population of Croatia was vastly influenced by migrations (aliah) that became considerable upon the foundation of the state of Israel in 1948, when 7.704 Jews left Yugoslavia, among which approximately 1.000 from Croatia, which made 50% of all those who survived the Holocaust.

For Israel, Jewish immigration was the question of survival; it enabled the development of the country, the demographic balance and the central role of Israel in the Jewish world. The migrations were still in growth in the period following the foundation of Israel - from 1948 to 1951 - when the survivors of concentration camps and World

Chart 3



War II came to Israel along with Jewish refugees from Muslim Arab countries. It is estimated that after World War II around 4,7 million Jews took part in international migrations that changed the geographic configuration of Jews. Some countries remained without Jewish population whereas in some of them the number of Jews significantly increased, especially in Israel and the USA.

Jewish migrations following the fall of Communist regimes in 1989 that greatly spread throughout the countries behind "the Iron Curtain" was not significant in Croatia; the same applies for the wartime of the 90's. Contrary to that: in that period, Croatia was the transit country for the refugees from other ex-Yugoslav republics and furthermore admitted a large number of refugees out of which many reside still today in Croatia.

Croatia is traditionally an émigré country with significant post-war migrations to Western European countries; migrations that increasingly grew from temporary into permanent. Those migrations have caused changes in the structure of the population of Croatia, although according to the population census the émigré masses were recorded as "workers at temporary work abroad".

Comparing the post-war migrations of Croats and Jews, one may notice a great and significant difference.

The Croatian population of the work-fit age initially went abroad while leaving their children and the elderly in Croatia. Later on, a part of them also left (family reunion) but the great so-called second

generation was born abroad and will most probably remain there.

The departures for Israel between 1948 and 1952 were permanent migration from the outset. Those who were leaving were compelled to renounce their citizenship and all ownership. Some of them later came back to Croatia. In aliah, Jews naturally took their children with them, among whom there were children born in the post-war baby boom. A part of elderly family members remained in Croatia. This additionally

altered the demographic picture of Jews in Croatia.

On the basis of available data, we tried to reconstruct the changes in Jewish population caused by aliah in that we compared the age structure of Jews that left Zagreb to Israel in 1948 with the ship "Radnik" (809) with those who remained in Zagreb in 1948 (1.260).

This Chart - No.3 - is made exclusively in order to illustrate the deep disturbance that was caused by the departure of such a great number of Community members.

Chart 4

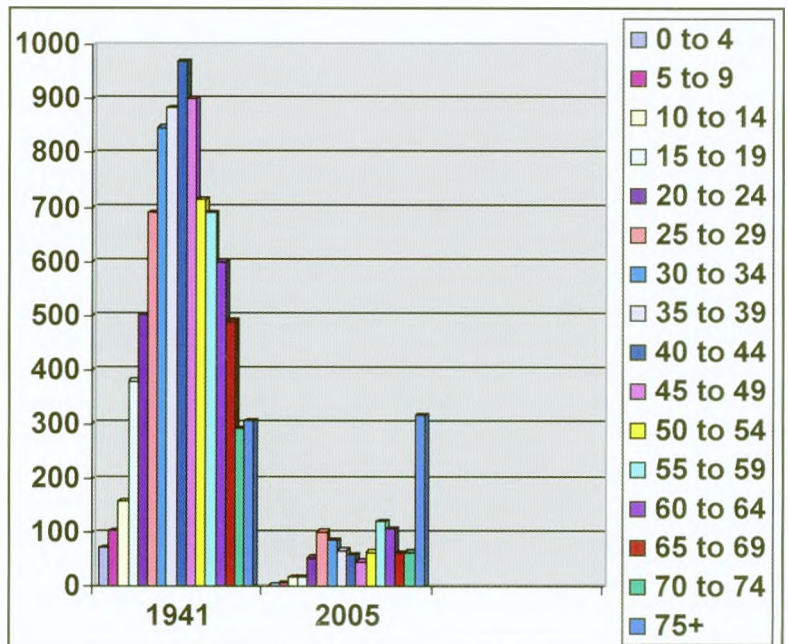
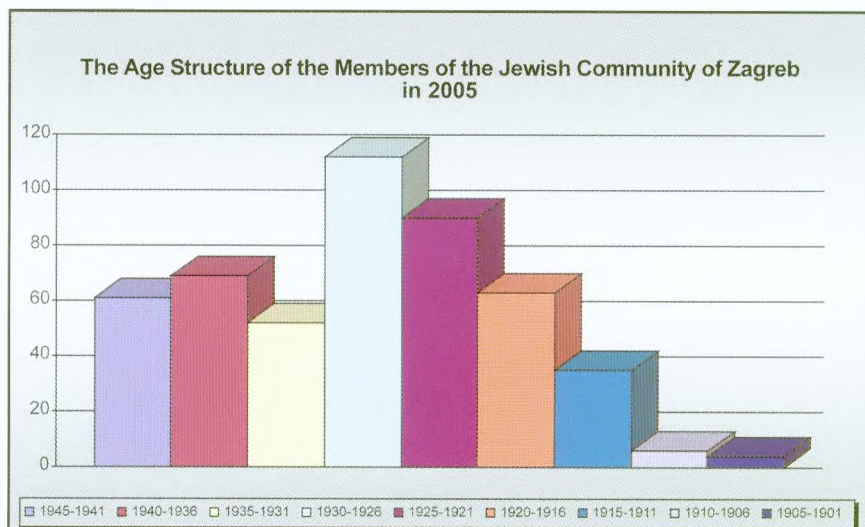


Chart 5



The wartime 90's have also generated changes due to a great number of Jewish refugees from Bosnia-Herzegovina that came to Croatia and passed through it. The younger generations and children usually continued to other countries whereas their elderly family members remained in Zagreb.

Chart No.4 demonstrates the consequences of those occurrences on the demographic picture of Jewish population in Croatia.

We made the comparison between the Jewish population in Zagreb in 1941 prior to the Holocaust and the actual Jewish population in Zagreb today. The differences are immense but the number of persons over 75 is number-wise practically identical (302- 1941 and 316- 2005) although in 1941 the survey was made on the sample of 8.598 members and in 2005 the sample was merely 1.182 members of the Jewish Community of Zagreb.

Those Who Survived the Holocaust

The total number of Holocaust survivors who are still alive is estimated to be 1.100.000, out of which 511.000 lives in Israel.

Due to the dispersion of population and the high death rate, it is impossible to determine with accuracy the number of actually living Jewish survivors of the Holocaust in Croatia - we speak of those who were born before the end of World War II and were in concentration camps or exposed to other kinds of persecution during Nazism.

During the action of the Swiss Fund in 1999 there was a total number about of 900 Holocaust survivors in Croatia, living in 60 inhabited locations: the majority was in

Zagreb (643), followed by Osijek (46), Split (49), Rijeka (34), Dubrovnik (12), Opatija (10), Čakovec (10), Varaždin (8) etc.

The biggest group of survivors consists of pre-school children hidden during the Holocaust (28%), followed by those who were rescued in the Italian zone of the NDH (Independent State of Croatia) and the participants of the NOB (National Liberation War).

Until recently, the records of the Zagreb Jewish Community showed 492 persons who survived the Holocaust but the number was reduced to 380 for various reasons: one part moved, a part doesn't reply to invitations or letters; some went to the home for the elderly whereas deaths occur on a daily basis.

The age structure of the population that survived the Holocaust and was still in Zagreb in 2005 is shown on Chart No. 5.

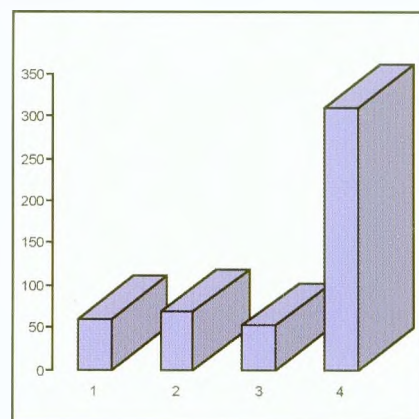
The highest column displays the generation born between 1926 and 1930, today between 75 and 79 years of age (112 or 22,7%), followed by the group between 80 and 84 (90 or 18,3%). Those who were born during the Holocaust in Croatia, i.e. in the period between 1941 and 1945, today are between 60 and 64 (61 or 12,4%).

Chart No. 6 shows all those over 75 in one column, thus emphasising their share in population.

The Jewish Population in Zagreb Today

It is only after an ample introduction that we are able to analyse the results of our more recent surveys. The actual picture shows that the demographic situation in the Jewish

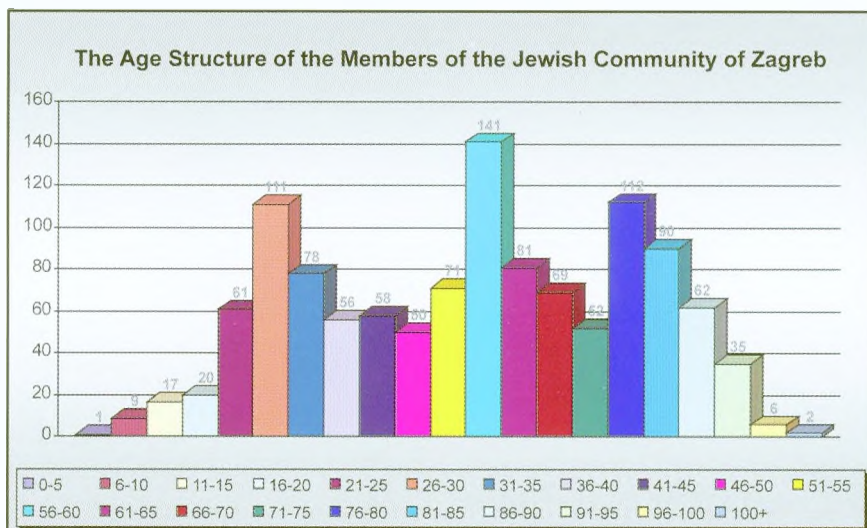
Chart 6



Community of Zagreb has improved.

If we consider the results (showed in Chart No. 7) from the aspect of generation shifts, we will notice three "peaks" i.e. three generations. The first peak (from right) represents the generation that survived

Chart 7



If we consider the results (showed in Chart No. 7) from the aspect of generation shifts, we will notice three “peaks” i.e. three generations. The first peak (from right) represents the generation that survived the Holocaust. The second peak is the generation born after World War II, today already in their 60s. The third peak represents their children, today in their mid- and late 20s. The end of chart shows new generations.

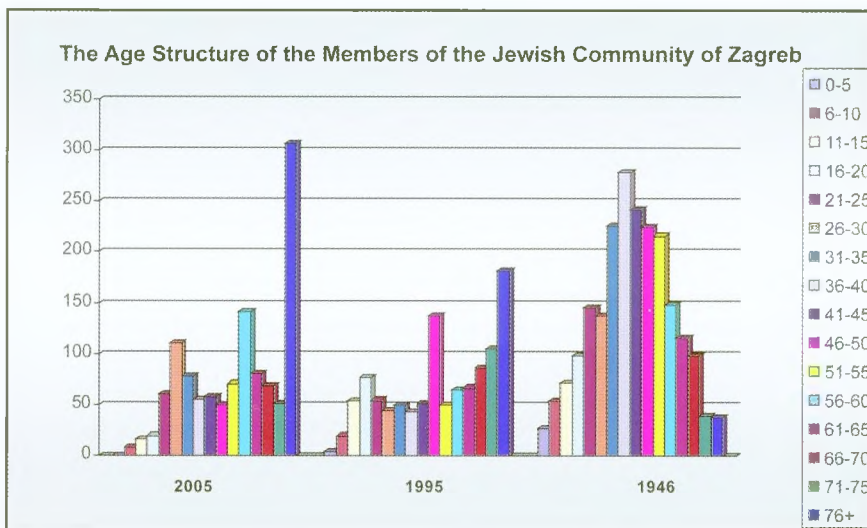
This is even more discernable in the table below. The once “truncated” generations, caused by the Holocaust and the aliah, are now enhanced by new generations and hence bring stability to our Jewish community.

Structure of Jews in Zagreb 2005

The Age	Number
0-5	1
6-10	9
11-15	17
16-20	20
21-25	61
26-30	111
31-35	78
36-40	56
41-45	58
46-50	50
51-55	71
56-60	141
61-65	81
66-70	69
71-75	52
76-80	112
81-85	90
86-90	62
91-95	35
96-100	6
100+	2

TOTAL: 1182

Chart 8



The last Chart, No. 8, compares the years 1946, 1995 and 2005 in order to demonstrate the existence of permanent growth among those who are the oldest survivors of the Holocaust - the over-75 group - and who are at present in need for care and attention.

The conclusion is nevertheless optimistic. In spite of all we went

through and the fact that we are few, it is clear that new generations are coming - the generations we need to keep in our community by providing them the general as well as Jewish education and creating opportunities for their accomplishment in society as well as in the community.

Today, the future of our community depends by and large on us.

Page 19: Front page of the Record Book of the Zagreb Hevra kaddisha Society from 1854, with the names of members from 1828; the page was designed and calligraphically inscribed by Abraham Cvi Najfeld (Neufeld), member of the Zagreb Orthodox Community

Page 20: The first layer of the front page of the Zagreb book of Hevra kaddisha Society, discovered during the restoration in 2002; by removing the pasted pieces, the original design of the front page was revealed - ornaments, pictures of charity collecting vessels, texts