

# **An Estimate of the Current Distribution of Jewish Victims of Nazi Persecution**

*Prepared for the*  
International Commission on Holocaust Era Insurance Claims

*by*  
Ukeles Associates Inc.

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## Executive Summary

### The Size of the Population of Nazi Victims, by Geographic Area

Using the best available current information, there are an estimated 687,900 Nazi victims in the world today.

The geographic distribution of Nazi victims is as follows:

- The largest number of Nazi victims are in Israel, estimated at 265,000;
- The second largest number are in the FSU, estimated at 149,800<sup>1</sup> (+/- 2,100);
- In Eastern and Western Europe, there are about 125,700 Nazi victims;
- In the United States, there are an estimated 109,900 Nazi victims;
- In the rest of the world, there are about 37,500 Nazi victims.

AREA	Number	Percent*
Israel	265,000	38.5%
FSU	149,800	21.8
Europe	125,700	18.3
United States	109,900	16.0
Rest of the World	37,500	5.5
Total	687,900	100%

The most important changes since the 2000 estimate provided by Ukeles Associates reflect an increase in the percent of Nazi victims in the United States, due primarily to an increase in the number of recent immigrants to the United States from the Former Soviet Union (FSU). The estimates for 2003 incorporate survey data for the United States, a recent study for Israel, and more up to date information for the Former Soviet Union. The data for Europe and the rest of the world continues to be sparse.

<sup>1</sup> Average of two different estimation methods, see below, p. 10.

\* Percents may not add to 100% because of rounding.

## Introduction

The purpose of this report is to update estimates of the number of Jewish victims of Nazi persecution prepared by Ukeles Associates, Inc. (UAI) for the Conference on Material Claims Against Germany and Austria (the Claims Conference) in the spring of 2000.<sup>2 3</sup>

At the time we wrote that "There are no reliable agreed-upon statistics on the number of Jewish Nazi victims living in the world today. The numbers presented in the following pages are estimates, based on the best available information. The methods for estimating Nazi victims vary by location."<sup>4</sup>

As in 2000, there is no comprehensive, world-wide survey-based data on Nazi victims.

In updating the original estimates, we have incorporated:

- A careful review of the information and methods used in 2000;
- New survey-based data on Nazi victims for the United States;
- Further analyses of survey-based data from a soon-to-be released study of Nazi victims in Israel;
- More complete information on Nazi victims in the FSU;
- Estimates of mortality and migration over the past three years.

As for the 2000 estimates, definitions are key, and we are using essentially the same definitions.

### Definitions

Two definitions are relevant to this data: the definition of a *Jewish person* and the definition of a *victim of Nazi persecution*.

For the purposes of this estimate, a Jewish person is an adult who self-defines as a Jew and/or is defined as Jewish under local community standards. This is roughly equivalent to the group some have defined as "core" Jews. Since the data are based on a variety of sources, one cannot be certain that all the underlying definitions are precisely equivalent.

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<sup>2</sup> Ukeles Associates Inc., Report # 2 An Estimate of the Current Distribution of Victims of Nazi Persecution (Claims Conference Planning Committee, 2000).

<sup>3</sup> The term "Nazi victim", as used in this paper, refers only to Jewish victims.

<sup>4</sup> Ukeles Associates Inc., Report # 2, page 2-2.

There are also various definitions of a Nazi victim in use in different programs; different estimates of the population of Nazi victims use different definitions as well. It is not always possible to be precise about definitions where data are so sparse. To the extent possible, the information presented in this report uses the following definition:<sup>5</sup>

Definition of a Nazi Victim: A Jew who lived in a country at the time when it was under a Nazi regime; under Nazi occupation, or under the regime of Nazi collaborators or who fled to a country or region not under Nazi rule or occupation due to Nazi rule or Nazi occupation.<sup>6 7</sup>

Two Caveats:

- (1) This is a broad, and inclusive definition; if a narrower definition were used, the numbers of Nazi victims would be considerably smaller;
- (2) This definition includes anyone who was born before mid-1945 and who meets the above criterion. If for example, if one included only people who were 10 years old at the end of the war, the numbers would only be about 75% as large.

This report is divided into four sections. Each section presents information for a different part of the world.

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<sup>5</sup> This is the definition generally used by Claims Conference in relation to social welfare services for Nazi victims.

<sup>6</sup> The definition includes only people who lived in regions of Russia under Nazi occupation or rule, as the entire country was not under Nazi rule.

<sup>7</sup> "Flight cases" includes people who fled shortly before their country was invaded, those who fled during the Nazi invasion of their country before it was entirely occupied, or those who fled shortly after their country was occupied.

## Estimates of the Number of Nazi Victims in Israel

The most authoritative source for information on Nazi victims in Israel was the 1997 survey undertaken by the Israel Central Bureau of Statistics (ICBS). This comprehensive study of people 60 and over living in their own homes (not institutions) and living in urban areas, was based a representative sample of 5,000 respondents.

Respondents were asked, "between 1933 and 1945, did you live in a country at the time that country was under Nazi rule, or under the control or direct influence of the Nazis?" Respondents were also asked if they were in a ghetto, in hiding, in a labor camp or in a concentration camp/death camp.

For the first time, this study included a series of questions that enabled one to estimate the number, age, characteristics, living conditions and needs of surviving Nazi victims. The Brookdale Institute conducted an exhaustive analysis of this data, and developed estimates of Nazi victims based on this survey.

The Brookdale estimate (for 1997) was completed in 2001 and is reproduced below (rounded to the nearest hundred person).<sup>8</sup>

In Concentration Camp/Death Camp	40,200
In a ghetto, in hiding, or in a labor camp	69,500
Self-defined Nazi victims in other situations	95,400
Flight Cases	77,900
Total	283,000

<sup>8</sup> Jenny Brodsky, Shmuel Be'er, & Yitschak Shnoor *Holocaust Survivors in Israel: Current and Projected Needs for Nursing Care at Home [unpublished final draft, 2003] p.3*. This study was commissioned by the Foundation for the Benefit of Holocaust Victims in Israel.

<sup>9</sup> There were also a small number of non-Europeans (about 18,000 people), primarily from North Africa, who self-identified as Nazi victims in the 1997 survey. The researchers and their advisors concluded that that data was of limited reliability and it was excluded from their estimates.

Unfortunately, this data covered only a portion, albeit the most significant portion, of the population of Nazi victims in Israel. This estimate is almost identical to the UAI estimate for 2000 for this portion of the population.<sup>10</sup>

The Brookdale Institute is in the final phases of a study which includes an update of their original estimates. The current project includes an extrapolation of the 1997 data to 2002, and a year-by-year forecast of the number of Nazi victims in Israel. The current estimates include groups that were not included in the earlier Brookdale estimates—those under 60, those living in rural areas and those living in institutions. The extrapolation from 1997 included estimates of mortality as well as an estimate of immigrant Nazi victims from the FSU who arrived during this period.

**The Brookdale estimate, based on the 1997 survey of the Israel Central Bureau of Statistics (ICBS), is the most reliable available estimate of the number of Nazi victims in Israel. According to this estimate, there are 265,000 victims of Nazi persecution living in Israel in 2003.**<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> The 2000 UAI estimate also included an estimate for institutionalized Nazi victims, for those living in rural areas, and for those under 60.

<sup>11</sup> Brodsky, *et. al.* Projected Needs . . . ., p.6. These unpublished data were graciously made available by the Brookdale Institute with the concurrence of the Foundation for the Benefit of Holocaust Victims in Israel.

## **Estimate of Nazi Victims in the Former Soviet Union**

### **Method 1 Based on the JDC MIS**

The most reliable information on Nazi victims in the Former Soviet Union is the Welfare Management Information System (MIS) of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC). This computerized system includes detailed information on all the indigent, primarily elderly, clients of the JDC in the Former Soviet Union (FSU), being served through one of the 174 Hesed programs in the FSU. An employee of the Hesed inputs and updates information about each client that receives services: general background (name, address, ID, etc.), living conditions, health, economic situation, Nazi Victim status, etc.

The MIS data are audited regularly by an independent audit group within the JDC, and the payment data based on the MIS data are audited regularly by the outside auditors of the Claims Conference. The data have been found to be highly reliable.

As of June 30, 2003, there were 124,600 Jewish Nazi victims recorded in the JDC MIS.

This data only covered a portion, albeit the most significant portion, of the population of Nazi victims in the Former Soviet Union. While the JDC has made extraordinary efforts to reach indigent Jews in the FSU, there are other Nazi victims:

- Indigents in Moscow, typically elderly who are not being served;
- People in underserved areas (primarily in Russia), including people in cities that JDC has not yet reached or has reached relatively recently (e.g. cities that were historically "closed");
- Those who are eligible, but for one reason or another do not seek service, including a small number who are not in need;
- Men, aged 58 and 59 who are ineligible for JDC assistance (as they are below the pension age) who are Nazi victims – born in 1944 or the first half of 1945).

Exhibit 3. Estimates of the number of Nazi victims not being served by the JDC in the Former Soviet Union, 2003			
	Potential Caseload	% Nazi Victims	Nazi Victims
Indigent in Moscow not yet served (primarily elderly) <sup>12</sup>	20,000	50%	10,000
Other areas in Russia underserved by JDC <sup>13</sup>	10,400	50%	5,200
Men age 58 & 59 (not served by JDC) <sup>14</sup>			500
Other elderly (not indigent or not seeking service) <sup>15</sup>			15,800
Total			23,100

**Combining the number of Nazi victims served by the JDC (124,600), and the estimate of other Nazi victims (23,100), we estimate that there are 147,700 Nazi victims in the FSU, using method 1.**

<sup>12</sup> The JDC Country Director for Moscow estimates 25,000 to 30,000 unserved indigents in Moscow.

<sup>13</sup> UAI estimate, based on data provided by JDC FSU staff; includes Northern regions and "closed cities" not yet served by JDC.

<sup>14</sup> Based on an extrapolation of the number of males in the welfare MIS for 1943.

<sup>15</sup> Assumes Nazi victims receiving service or needing service represent 95% of Nazi victims, extrapolating from anecdotal information provided by JDC FSU staff.



## Method 2

A second method relies on an adjustment to published Census-based data for the FSU. These estimates are based on extrapolations from the 1989 Soviet Census, with a variety of subsequent adjustments based on mortality and migration data. Interpolations in published data, suggests that in 2003 there were about 239,600 registered "core" Jews over 55 in the FSU.<sup>16</sup> Of Jews over 55 in the FSU welfare MIS, 57% are Nazi victims. This yields an overall estimate of 129,100 registered Nazi victims (see Exhibit 4).

	2002	2003
Est. Core Jewish population, FSU	432,000	
Latvia, Estonia & Lithuania	(-15,000)	
Total FSU (excluding Baltic States)	417,000	394,000
Estimated Percentage, 55+ (in Russia)		57.4%
Estimated Jews in FSU, 55 and over (applying the Russia %)		239,600
Estimated Number of "registered" Nazi victims <sup>17</sup>		129,100

These estimates assume that Jews in the Soviet Union registered as having a Jewish nationality on their passports when required to under the Soviet regime. Yet, it is widely believed in the FSU that many Jews did not register as Jews because of issues of employment and education discrimination, as well as general fear. In addition, children of inter-nationality marriages were offered a choice of registry. It is believed that even today, many Jews prefer to self-identify as Russian or Ukrainian in the recent census in each of those countries.

<sup>16</sup>Sergio Della Pergola and Mark Tolts, Main Demographic Trends of the Jews in Russia and the FSU (Jerusalem, 2002). p. 7, p. 39

<sup>17</sup> 57% of the 55+ people in the Welfare MIS are Nazi victims

A series of community studies in the FSU over the past ten years gives us the basis for estimating the “under-reporting” of Jewish self-identification.

Exhibit 6 below summarizes the findings from these studies. While there is a substantial range based on place, date and age, it appears that on average, at least 15% of the older population did not register as Jews (See Exhibit 5). This translates into an additional 22,800 Nazi victims.

Exhibit 5. Data from recent studies in the FSU on the percent of self-identified older Jews who were not identified as Jewish in passports. <sup>18</sup>		
Study Date	% Not Identified as Jewish by Passport	Age
Moldova, 2001	26%	50+
Ukraine, 1997/98	25%	50 to 59
	16%	60 to 69
	9%	70+
Russia, 1997/98	14%	50 to 59
	12%	60 to 69
	4%	70+

**Combining an estimate of the number of “registered” Nazi victims (129,100) with an estimate of the number of “unregistered” Nazi victims (22,800), we estimate that there are 151,900 Nazi victims in the FSU, using method 2.**

**The two estimates of the number of Nazi victims in the FSU can be averaged:**

- **Method 1: 147,700**
- **Method 2: 151,900**
- **Average: 149,800 (+/-2100)**

<sup>18</sup> The Moldova study was conducted by the Brookdale Foundation and the studies in the Ukraine and Russia were conducted by Professor Vladimir Shapiro. Ukraine included Kiev, Kharkov, Lvov, Odessa, and Chernovtzy. Russia included Moscow, St. Petersburg, and Ekaterinburg.

## Estimates of the Number of Nazi Victims in the United States

The recently released 2000-2001 National Jewish Population Study (NJPS) provides the first reliable data regarding Nazi victims in the United States. The 2000-2001 survey of over 4,000 Jewish households in the United States included a series of questions related to the Holocaust that are similar to the questions asked in the 1997 ICBS study of Israelis sixty years old and over.

Exhibit 6. Estimated Number of Nazi victims, 56 years and over with a European background in the United States, 2000-2001 <sup>19</sup>	
In Concentration Camp/Death Camp	20,400
In a labor camp	15,700
Self-defined Nazi victims in other situations	50,700
Flight Cases	35,200
Total	122,000

In order to update the 2000-2001 estimate to June 30, 2003, one has to take into account mortality and in-migration from the FSU.

Exhibit 7. Estimated Number of Nazi victims, 58 years and over with a European background in the United States, 2003 <sup>20</sup>	
As of Jan 1, 2001	122,000
Mortality (@ 4.5% per year for 2.5 years)	-13,200
In-migration (for 2.5 years)	+1,100
Total, as of June 30, 2003	109,900

**There are an estimated 109,900 Nazi victims in the United States today.**

<sup>19</sup>Nazi Victims Now Residing in the United States: Findings from the National Jewish Population Survey 2000-01 (United Jewish Communities, November, 2003,draft) page 2.

<sup>20</sup>UAI analysis of data from the NJPS.

## Estimates of the Number of Nazi Victims in Europe (excluding the FSU)

There are no survey-based data on the number of Nazi victims in Europe. This is the same situation that existed when the 2000 UAI estimate was completed. In 2000, UAI estimated that there were 142,000 surviving Nazi victims in Europe. This estimate was extrapolated from estimates prepared from Factor in 1998 and Spanic & Factor in 1997. Their estimates included an upward adjustment to reflect migration from the FSU to Germany. Since that time there has continuing migration from the FSU to Germany, but most of that migration is of younger people. **Applying average mortality rates (4.5% per year) to the 2000 estimate yields an estimate of 125,700.**

Exhibit 8. Estimated Number of Nazi victims, 58 years and over in Europe, 2003	
As of June 2000	142,000
Mortality (@ 4.5% per year for 3 years)	-18,300
In-migration to Germany	+2,000
Total, as of June 30, 2003	125,700

## The Rest of the World

As in Europe, there is no survey-based information regarding Nazi victims in the rest of the world. This is the same situation that existed when the 2000 UAI estimate was completed. In 2000, UAI estimated that there were 43,000 surviving Nazi victims in the rest of the world. This estimate was extrapolated from estimates prepared from Factor in 1998 and Spanic & Factor in 1997.

**Applying average mortality rates (4.5% per year) to the 2000 estimate yields an estimate of 37,500.**

Exhibit 9. Estimated Number of Nazi victims, 58 years and over in the rest of the world, 2003	
As of June 2000	43,000
Mortality (@ 4.5% per year for 3 years)	5,500
Total, as of June 30, 2003	37,500