

President's Message April 2008

I was able to attend a meeting sponsored by the [Union for Reform Judaism](#) (URJ) on Jewish demographics. It was held at [Temple B'nai Jeshurun](#) in Short Hills on March 2nd. The presenter was [Ira Sheskin, Ph.D.](#), of the Department of Geography at the University of Miami (in FL). The presentation was loaded with statistics, and many people in the audience were noticeably nodding off. NOT ME. I have spent most of my professional life attempting to make sense and draw inferences from statistical information that most other people find arcane.

Dr. Sheskin used a survey technique called random digit dialing to obtain his information. Although I am not an expert in this approach, it should be projectable with sufficient accuracy to the population at large. I assume that he had people like my daughter Sarah in his sampling "frame," even though Sarah's only phone is cellular. Without any commentary/analysis, let me share some of this "arcane" information with the reader. The numbers that follow should be considered "directional" in nature, and not accurate to the last decimal place. One more note, for this survey, one is a Jew if one says they are a Jew.

Number of Jews in New Jersey

1960 - 326,000

1980 - 443,000

2000 - 468,000

2007 - 498,000, 5.7% of the state population.

In 2007, only New York (1,617,720 - 8.4%), California (1,194,190 - 3.3%) and Florida (654,935 - 3.6%) had more Jews.

The three counties with the largest Jewish population in 2007 are Bergen (83,700 - 17%), Essex (76,200 - 15%), Monmouth (64,000+6,000 part-time mainly summer - 13%). Morris county had 33,500 - 7% and Warren county is 400 (another of his documents has 900 Jews in Warren county; I am unable reconcile this apparent discrepancy). Warren County's website, www.co.warren.nj.us, has the population of Warren county as 110,000. Thus Warren county has less than 1% of the population describing themselves as Jews. Hunterdon County (www.co.hunterdon.nj.us) has a total population (with a little estimation) around 130,000 in 2007. Dr. Sheskin has 1500 Jews estimated in Hunterdon County, slightly more than 1% of the population.

In what follows, results are only presented for Monmouth, Bergen, Essex or Morris counties due to numbers being smaller for other counties. Some other interesting factoids follow: Over 84% of Jews in these counties participate in a Passover seder. For Bergen County, 69% of Jews married to a Christian partner have a Christmas tree, while 2% of Jews married to a Jewish partner have a Christmas tree. Again for Bergen County, in intermarried households (definition, one partner is Jewish, the other is not) 59% of their children are being raised Jewish.

Once more for Bergen County, 39% of Jews have utilized the Internet in the past year for Jewish related information. It is interesting to see the age gradation for this result. Under 35 years, 51%; over 35 to 49 years, 50%; 50 years to 64 years, 40%; 65-75, 23% and greater than 75 years, 1%. Also for Bergen County, the estimate of Jews by choice is 2.6% of the Jewish population. Finally, 62% of Jewish households in Bergen County have a household member who has ever visited Israel.

There are many more interesting factoids in this study. Information about our fellow Jews is not easy to obtain. As I mentioned previously, these numbers should not be taken as exact by any means. They can indicate important trends and benchmarks. Should anyone (school projects?) want further access to these results, please contact me at Arvesen @att.net or by phone at 917-941-4332.

Shalom,

Jim Arvesen