The evolution of home-state positions towards diaspora formation: Israel and its two diasporas

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Online Appendix

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1. Methodological Notes

The Case Study

The article uses a single-case approach. Focusing on a one particular case enables qualitative researchers to interrogate their empirical evidence more closely and profoundly. This approach is likely to result in a more thorough, accurate, and context-sensitive analysis based on the researcher's command of the studied country's history, society, culture, and language (see Pepinsky 2019). Single-case research designs are especially useful for theory generation. As John Gerring (2007, 40) postulates, "Case studies may be more useful than cross-case studies when a subject is being encountered for the first time or is being considered in a fundamentally new way." Since my goal in this article was to examine how home-state elites react to the emergence, endurance, and relationships of a *diaspora* community abroad – rather than to investigate these elites' general stance toward emigrants and emigration, as previous works of state-emigrants relations have done – a single-case approach seemed the most suitable.

A single-case study is particularly beneficial when the value of a key variable in the case is extreme. In such studies, the analysis can uncover new theoretical variables or causal mechanisms (George and Bennett 2005, 81). In this sense, Israel makes an "extreme" case for the study of home-state positions toward emigrants due to the continuous attention given to emigration in its elite and popular discourse throughout its history (Yehudai 2020), the frequent politicization of this discourse (Amit 2019),

and its rapid and dramatic transformation since the 1990s (Cohen 2007). More generally, Israel is a "paradigmatic" case study of state-diaspora relations. As Yehonatan Abramson (2023, 2–3) explains, not only are these relations exceptional for their "intensity and duration," but "Other governments and international agencies look at Israel as a model for successful diaspora engagement and learn from it" as well. In addition, Abramson writes that since "state-diaspora relations in Israel are an issue of domestic political consensus among elites rather than competition," this case can "offer new insights into the drivers of state-diaspora engagement, and these may also be applicable to other cases."

A single-case approach, however, has inherent limitations, regardless of the chosen case's representativeness of a wider population of cases. It is more difficult to generalize based on a single case, and such generalizations tend to be speculative until they are corroborated through cross-case analysis (Gerring 2007, 78, 84–85). Therefore, as Alexandra Délano and Alan Gamlen (2014) propose, the study of state-diaspora relations would benefit from both single-case studies and other approaches, such as comparative methods. Indeed, I hope that in the future, my in-depth study of Israel and its two diasporas will be useful for comparative purposes. As a first step toward this goal, the article concludes with a brief comparison with a similar case – that of Yugoslavia in the 1960s and 1970s. This comparison has yielded interesting insight, which stresses the need for additional and more comprehensive comparative projects of this kind.

Studying Elite Positions

My analysis focused on the discourse, policies, and practices of Israeli political and bureaucratic *elites* (rather than, say, the public discourse toward emigrants or their media coverage). As Alexander Betts and Will Jones (2016, 226–27) argue, the study of political elites can reveal dynamics of inclusion and exclusion, which is my goal in investigating how Israel reacted to the actions and interactions of emigrants. It is therefore imperative to clarify who fits the definition of Israeli elites in this article.

Elites, in general, are "those who have vastly disproportionate control over or access to a resource" (Khan 2012, 362). However, the concept of elites has been stretched over the years as researchers used it to define many different actors (Kertzer and Renshon 2022, 534). In the article, I adopt the occupational model, which defines elites as "actors whose institutional roles afford them higher levels of influence over public policy: prime ministers, legislators, civil servants, bureaucrats, diplomats, military officers, and so on" (Kertzer and Renshon 2022, 535). Another useful definition, found in the introduction to an edited volume on political elites, conceptualizes them as "individuals and small, relatively cohesive, and stable groups with disproportionate power to affect national and supranational political outcomes on a continuing basis." This definition, too, highlights elites' ability to shape political reality as they "participate in or directly influence political decision-making" (Best and Higley 2018, 3).

In other words, the article focuses on the positions of people who can influence the way Israel defines and treats "its" emigrants and diasporas

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over time – government ministers, parliament members, diplomats, bureaucrats, and other officials in Israel and abroad who are tasked with governing, managing, or maintaining ties with citizens and co-ethnics outside Israel's borders. Together, these individuals produced, disseminated, debated, and modified a dominant Israeli discourse toward the emergence of a new diaspora, which changed over time, leading to various political outcomes.

Discourse Analysis

The main method I used for investigating Israeli elites' changing positions toward the formation of an Israeli diaspora was discourse analysis. Studying the "set of statements and practices through which certain language becomes institutionalized and 'normalized' over time" (Neumann 2008, 61) is important for understanding why and how elites react to emigration, diaspora formation, and diaspora-diaspora interactions the way they react. As Abramson (2023, 8) maintains, "discourse both reflects and is a product of social reality. In other words, discourse is a lens through which we can understand society's 'common sense' as well as an active participant in creating social identities, positions, and knowledge." Focusing solely on language, however, may not be enough; when studying a discourse, it is methodologically important to examine how it is translated into reality – how it makes certain policies and practices seem more logical than others, and what are the tangible outcomes of this process (Milliken 1999).

Within the context of state-diaspora relations, home-state elites' discourse about emigrants and co-ethnics abroad can teach us how these elites conceptualize the broader nation – what things are more and less important in their national imagination and what are their criteria for inclusion in and exclusion from the national community (Boccagni 2014, 132). As for the outcomes of such discourses, studies from different parts of the world demonstrate that the discursive inclusion of emigrants in the state's national story and their recognition as part of "the people" are essential for the creation of institutions that, in turn, enable the state to engage with emigrants. This is especially the case for home states whose political elites used to associate emigration with desertion or disloyalty to the state (Collyer 2013, 20). Israel, in which emigration was – and in some senses still is – portrayed negatively, as a betrayal of the Zionist idea of mass Jewish immigration to the country (Mitelpunkt 2022), is evidently one of these countries.

Analyzing the discourse of Israeli elites, then, is crucial for tracing the evolution of their positions toward diaspora formation. To explain the outcomes of discursive shifts, I also investigated Israeli policies, actions, and events targeting the emerging diaspora and its relations with the veteran Jewish diaspora in destination countries. I discuss all of this below.

Data Collection and Analysis

To understand how Israeli elites viewed, framed, and engaged with emigrants and the new Israeli diaspora, I analyzed a variety of historical and contemporary sources. My main source was an original database of

Israeli discussions at the Knesset, Israel's parliament, concerning emigrants and emigration, which I created in 2022 and 2023. As recent studies have shown (e.g., Abramson 2023; Abu 2022; Artan 2022; Gherghina, Tap, and Soare 2022), parliamentary records are a vital resource for the investigation of state actors' attitudes toward emigrants and diasporas. Examining how home-state policymakers and policy implementers talk about emigrants and diasporas in the state's legislature not only provides insight into how these elites conceive and socially construct co-ethnic overseas populations; these debates also have tangible outcomes, as they inform the home state's agenda and policies toward emigrants (Gherghina, Tap, and Soare 2022, 488). Indeed, as my analysis shows, the Israeli parliamentary debates on emigrants illustrate how different political actors envisaged national membership and how these views have changed over time and resulted in different policies and actions.

While parliamentary debates may be repetitive, with similar arguments and concepts recurring in many sessions, analyzing them over a long span of time reveals important changes. The emergence of new concepts and the decline of old ones indicate significant political transformations (Ihalainen and Palonen 2009, 28). In the Israeli case, the emerging concept of "the Israeli diaspora" was particularly significant. As shown in the article, this concept, which conveyed an understanding of Israeli emigrant communities as a legitimate diaspora, gradually replaced previously derogatory concepts such as "weaklings," which had been common in

Israeli elite discourse in the 1970s and 1980s. To capture such incremental changes, I examined parliamentary records stretching over more than four decades.

The database begins in 1977 – the year in which the Knesset's Committee for Immigration, Absorption, and Diaspora Affairs (henceforth, the Immigration Committee) was established in order to deal, among other things, with the emigration issue.[1] According to Nir Cohen's periodization, the year 1977 also marked the beginning of a substantial shift in Israeli public and elite discourse toward emigrants – from the "overt rejection" of the first decades to a "cautious rapprochement" (Cohen 2007, 270). In my article, I adopted a somewhat different periodization than Cohen's, based on my empirical findings and the fact that Cohen's analysis ended in the early 2000s. However, the evidence supports his designation of 1977 as a turning point; therefore, I use it as my point of departure. My database ends in May 2023, the last month for which discussions about these issues were available at the time of writing.

To create the database, I relied on the Knesset website, which provides access to the records of most discussions at the parliament's plenary and committees.[2] First, I manually browsed through the records of all sessions of the Immigration Committee in which Israeli members of Knesset and

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[1] Knesset, Immigration Committee, 5 July 1977, 4. The Committee's original name was the Committee for Immigration and Immigrant Absorption Affairs. "Diaspora" was added to its name in the late 1990s.

[2] https://main.knesset.gov.il/pages/default.aspx. Some Immigration Committee records, especially from the last few years, are classified and unavailable due to unspecified reasons.

other officials discussed emigrants, emigration, and relations with the Israeli and Jewish diasporas. Emigrant-related issues were sometimes debated at the Knesset outside the Immigration Committee, even though not as often. Therefore, I also reviewed, annotated, and coded relevant debates at the Knesset plenary, the legislature's main arena for parliamentary discussion. As the total number of plenary records – over 8,400 at the time of writing – was too high to manually read and annotate, I ran digital searches to identify sessions in which emigrants were discussed. I used both the Knesset website's internal search engine and Google to make sure that I did not miss on any relevant records (indeed, my Google searches returned several records that the Knesset site failed to capture). I looked up the Hebrew keywords " ישראלים בחוץ לארץ" ("Israelis abroad"), "יורדים" (*yordim* – "those who descend" – a common derogatory term used to describe emigrants until recently, as opposed to *olim* – "those who ascend"), "נמושות" ("*nemushot*" – "weaklings" – another derogatory term that became famous when Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin used it in 1976 to denounce emigrants, and is still invoked today during discussions on emigration), and "הצבעה"/"הצבעת" ("voting" – since much of the plenary debate regarding emigrants revolved around the question of allowing them to vote from abroad). For this reason, I also searched the Knesset website for emigrant enfranchisement bills (none of which has been approved to date).
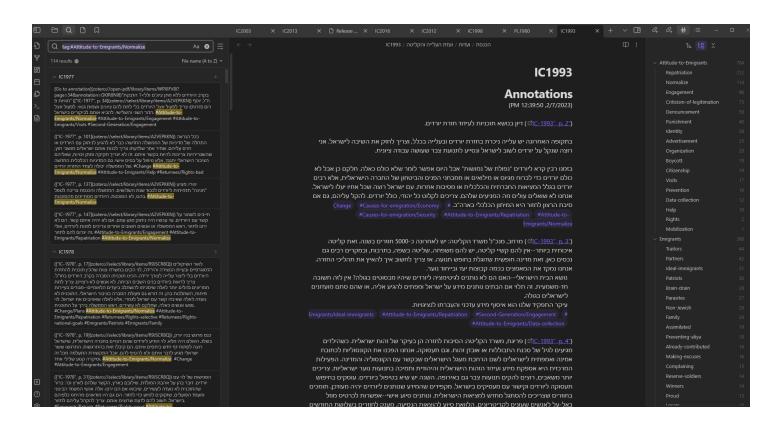
Next, I prepared the data for analysis. I downloaded all the relevant records (as PDF or Word documents, depending on their date. Word

documents were converted to PDF ones, which were easier to annotate), reviewed them, and annotated relevant segments (in Hebrew). When a session was explicitly dedicated to emigration or Israel-diaspora relations, I read it in its entirety; when the session's title was more general, I digitally searched the document for the keywords "יורד" (emigrant), "ישראלי" (Israeli), "חוזר" (returnee), "ירידה" (emigration), "אזרח" (citizen), and "תושב" (resident) – which usually recurred in discussions of emigrants and emigration. In all of the records, I only annotated relevant sections in which emigration, Israeli emigrants, or the Israeli diasporas were discussed.

All in all, I found 313 potentially relevant records. Most of them were of meetings at the Knesset's Immigration Committee (252 records) and plenary (39 records, including five sessions from the late 1960s and early 1970s that I annotated, coded, and analyzed to make sure that my periodization was valid). My searches did not yield pertinent records from other parliamentary committees save for two 2002 sessions of the Constitution, Law, and Justice Committee. These records are included in the database but not in the article because they pertain to overseas citizens in general, not to the Israeli diaspora. The same goes for the twenty emigrant enfranchisement bills that I analyzed.

After I reviewed and annotated these documents, I used Obsidian, a personal knowledge management system, to code my annotations for thematic analysis (see screenshot below). I employed a combination of inductive and deductive coding, compiling a preliminary list of codes

based on my review of the theoretical literature. Throughout my reading and annotation of the sources, I added to this list new codes emerging from the data (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane 2006). I used the subcoding method – also known as "embedded coding," "nested coding," etc. (Saldaña 2013, 78–80). According to this method, more general codes (such as "EMIGRANTS," which is attached to segments in which elites describe emigrants in parliamentary debates, regardless of how they are portrayed) encompass more specific codes (e.g., "EMIGRANTS\TRAITORS" or "EMIGRANTS\PARTNERS," which denote the particular way in which emigrants are described). The next section includes the list of codes that I used for this research. The resulting qualitative data set was the basis for the analysis.

This coding scheme, combined with the organization of documents in chronological order and Obsidian's tagging and retrieval capabilities, enabled me to track the evolution of discourses and policies over time. In this fashion, I was able to analyze both general themes (for example, by grouping together all the instances in which Israeli officials discussed the emerging Israeli diaspora) as well as more nuanced ones (for example, all the instances in which this diaspora was discussed as a distinct group vis-à-vis the traditional Jewish diaspora, or as a potential source of Jewish immigration to Israel). In addition, the subcoding method allowed me to identify interesting themes that were irrelevant to this article's research questions but may become useful in future studies.

To obtain a fuller and more accurate understanding of Israeli elites' changing positions toward emigrants, I relied on additional sources, a research strategy known as triangulation (Kapiszewski, MacLean, and Read 2015; Kuorikoski and Marchionni 2016). By analyzing evidence beyond the parliamentary discussions, I was able to corroborate and follow up on details mentioned in them and to analyze the discourse of elites who did not participate in these discussions, such as diplomats stationed abroad. For this reason, I searched the Israel State Archives catalog using the Hebrew search terms "Israelis abroad" and "emigrants." This search yielded only three relevant files (one of which was a collection of documents from the years 1960–1967 that did not fit the article's time frame), most likely since the bulk of relevant documents are still classified.

Other, more contemporary sources that I used included press sources, as well as information from the websites and publications of major emigrant organizations (e.g., the Israeli American Council), Israeli programs and institutions targeting the diaspora (e.g., the Ministry for Diaspora Affairs or Mosaic United), think tanks investigating emigration-related issues (e.g., the Jewish People Policy Institute), and secondary literature. Pertinent sources of this kind, too, served to complement and follow up on the data found in the parliamentary records. For instance, I searched the Mosaic United website because this initiative was discussed at the Immigration Committee several times between 2016 and 2018, and I scrutinized the Israeli American Council's website due to this organization's prominence in parliamentary debates and in the secondary literature (E.g., Cohen 2021; Gold 2022). These sources were also crucial for getting a fuller picture of Israel's positions since 2019 – a period in which the Knesset proceedings were often irregular because of a continuing political crisis, resulting in five national elections between 2019 and 2022, as well as the COVID-19 pandemic.

All translations from Hebrew throughout the article are mine.

2. The List of Codes

- **#Israeli-diaspora** – discussions of the Israeli diaspora.

  - **#Israeli-diaspora/Formation** — officials discussing the consolidation of a distinct Israeli diaspora through the creation of emigrant organizations and institutions or the emergence of a diasporic consciousness among Israeli emigrants.

  - **#Israeli-diaspora/Positive** — officials discussing the Israeli diaspora in positive terms, i.e., as an asset from which Israel can benefit.

  - **#Israeli-diaspora/Negative** — officials discussing the Israeli diaspora in negative terms, i.e., as a threat that can harm Israel.

  - **#Israeli-diaspora/Distinct** — officials discussing the Israeli diaspora as distinct from the Jewish diaspora.

  - **#Israeli-diaspora/Same** — officials discussing the Israeli diaspora as an integral part of the Jewish diaspora.

  - **#Israeli-diaspora/Elite** — officials discussing elite members and leaders of the Israeli diaspora.

- **#Israelis-Jews-Relations** — officials discussing the Israeli diaspora's relationship with the veteran Jewish diaspora (this code does not have nested subcodes).

- **#Emigrants** — officials discussing the Israeli emigrants themselves (e.g., their personality, their behavior, etc.)

  - **#Emigrants/Traitors** — emigrants are discussed as traitors, deserters, sinners, anti-Zionists, haters of Israel, harming Israel, etc., including references to them as "fallen among the weaklings."

  - **#Emigrants/Failed-Zionists** — emigrants are discussed as failed Zionists whose actions are detrimental to Israel, even though they do not intentionally mean to harm it.

  - **#Emigrants/Preventing-aliya** — emigrants are discussed as discouraging diaspora Jews from immigrating to Israel (*aliya*, "descent," is the common term for Jewish immigration to Israel).

  - **#Emigrants/Making-excuses** — emigrants are discussed as trying to justify their emigration or claiming that their residence abroad is only temporary.

  - **#Emigrants/Complaining** — emigrants are discussed as complaining about Israel's attitudes toward them.

  - **#Emigrants/Losers** — emigrants are discussed as economically unsuccessful, either in Israel or abroad.

- **#Emigrants/Winners** — emigrants are discussed as economically successful and highly skilled people capable of contributing to Israeli society.

- **#Emigrants/Already-contributed** — emigrants are discussed as people who have already contributed to Israel and its society (e.g., by serving in the military).

- **#Emigrants/Brain-drain** — emigrants are described as depriving Israel of important human resources.

- **#Emigrants/Patriots** — emigrants are discussed as people who care about Israel (and may want to return at some point).

- **#Emigrants/Partners** — emigrants are discussed as people who can help Israel while residing abroad.

- **#Emigrants/Reserve-soldiers** — emigrants are discussed as potential reserve soldiers who may travel to Israel to defend it when the need arises, or as depriving the IDF of such military personnel.

- **#Emigrants/Ideal-immigrants** — emigrants are discussed as ideal Jewish immigrants to Israel because of their knowledge of the Hebrew language, their familiarity with Israeli culture and norms, their family and friends who reside in the country, etc.

- ○ **#Emigrants/Assimilated** — emigrants are discussed as not caring about Israel and/or as assimilated into the general societies of their countries of residence.

- ○ **#Emigrants/Parasites** — emigrants are discussed as trying to take advantage of their Israeli citizenship and extract the rights and benefits associated with it without contributing to Israel.

- ○ **#Emigrants/Proud** — emigrants are discussed as being proud of their emigration or publicly bragging about it.

- ○ **#Emigrants/Ashamed** — emigrants are discussed as being ashamed of their emigration.

- ○ **#Emigrants/Non-Jewish** — discussions of non-Jews emigrating from Israel (especially Muslim or Christian Arab Palestinians).

- ○ **#Emigrants/Family** — emigrants are referred to in familial terms (as sons, brothers, etc.).

- ● **#Attitude-to-Emigrants** — discussions of how Israel should treat emigrants or how it already treats them.

  - ○ **#Attitude-to-Emigrants/Boycott** — Israel should boycott emigrants, ignore them, or distance itself from them.

- **#Attitude-to-Emigrants/Punishment** — Israel should use (or consider using) sanctions against the emigrants, restrict their rights, or cut the services offered to them.

- **#Attitude-to-Emigrants/Engagement** — Israel should engage with the emigrants and maintain ties with them.

- **#Attitude-to-Emigrants/Organization** — Israel should help emigrants organize as a diaspora community (e.g., by creating and maintaining Israeli community centers or Hebrew schools in their places of residence).

- **#Attitude-to-Emigrants/Mobilization** — Israel should harness emigrants to promote its interests in their countries of residence.

- **#Attitude-to-Emigrants/Repatriation** — Israel should try to bring the emigrants back to Israel.

- **#Attitude-to-Emigrants/Visits** — Israel should encourage visits of emigrants or their children to Israel.

- **#Attitude-to-Emigrants/Rights** — Israel should provide emigrants with rights and services.

- **#Attitude-to-Emigrants/Identity** — Israel should endeavor to maintain the Jewish or Israeli identity of emigrants and their children.

○ **#Attitude-to-Emigrants/Denouncement** — Israel should publicly denounce, scold, shame, and delegitimize emigrants.

○ **#Attitude-to-Emigrants/Help** — Israel should assist emigrants in need.

○ **#Attitude-to-Emigrants/Normalize** — Israel should refrain from denigrating emigrants, stop scolding and shaming them, or actively try to improve their tarnished public image.

○ **#Attitude-to-Emigrants/Citizenship** — the emigrants are Israeli citizens; therefore, Israeli representatives should treat them as such.

○ **#Attitude-to-Emigrants/Data-collection** — Israel should collect data on emigrants.

○ **#Attitude-to-Emigrants/Advertisement** — discussions of the ways in which Israel advertises or needs to communicate its policies and positions to the emigrants.

○ **#Attitude-to-Emigrants/Criticism-of-legitimation** — criticism of the Israeli government or Israeli officials who legitimize emigrants and their residence abroad.

○ **#Attitude-to-Emigrants/Prevention** — Israel should focus on preventing further emigration rather than (or in addition to) engaging with or repatriating those who have already left.

- **#Second-Generation** — discussions of the children and grandchildren of Israeli emigrants.

  - **#Second-Generation/Hope** — the children of emigrants are discussed as potential immigrants to or allies of Israel.

  - **#Second-Generation/Assimilation** — the children of emigrants are discussed as being in danger of assimilation into the general societies of their countries of residence.

  - **#Second-Generation/Engagement** — discussions of the need to engage with children of emigrants and of programs that are already aimed at this purpose.

  - **#Second-Generation/IDF** — discussions of issues related to the mandatory or voluntary service of children of emigrants in the Israel Defense Forces.

  - **#Second-Generation/Naturalization** — discussions of issues related to the acquisition of Israeli citizenship by children of emigrants.

  - **#Second-Generation/Education** — discussions of issues related to the Jewish and Israeli education of children of emigrants.

- **#Change** — Indications of a change in Israel's discourses or policies toward emigrants.

- ○ **#Change/Concrete** — discussions of the adoption of concrete policies or measures toward emigrants and returnees.

- ○ **#Change/Plans** — discussions of the creation or possible creation of committees, programs, etc., which are related to emigration, but without actual policy implementation at the time of the discussion.

- ● **#Yerida** — discussions of the general phenomenon of emigration from Israel ("ירידה"/*yerida* – "descent" – is the derogatory term commonly used to describe Jewish emigration from Israel).

  - ○ **#Yerida/Crisis** — emigration is discussed as a national disaster, catastrophe, disease, failure, etc.

  - ○ **#Yerida/Problem** — emigration is discussed negatively but in more moderate terms, as a national problem in need of a solution.

  - ○ **#Yerida/Normal** — emigration is discussed as a normal phenomenon that occurs in many countries.

- ● **#Politics** — issues pertaining to Israeli party politics.

  - ○ **#Politics/Consensus** — Israeli politicians of different parties agreeing with one another on emigration-related issues.

  - ○ **#Politics/Dissent** — Israeli politicians of different parties arguing with each other over the causes of emigration, the

desirable treatment of emigrants, the legitimation of emigrants, etc.

- **#Demography** — discussions of emigrants as endangering Israel's demographic goal of having a large Jewish majority, or of returnees as strengthening this majority (this code does not have nested subcodes).

- **#Claims** — discussions of Israeli emigrants making claims to Israel (this code does not have nested subcodes).

3. A Demographic Note on the Number of Israeli Emigrants

There is no consensus on the number of Israelis living outside of Israel. Counting them has proved to be methodologically difficult and controversial (Lustick 2011, 40–43). According to the Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics (ICBS), around 756,000 Israelis left the country permanently between 1948 and 2020. In 2020, the ICBS assessed the number of Israeli citizens living abroad for more than a year at 572–612 thousand, not including their children who had been born abroad.[3] Like Israel's population, these emigrants are predominantly Jewish. The Jewish People Policy Institute estimated that the number of Jewish Israelis abroad rose from 300,000 in 1989 to 575,000 in 2015. One-half to two-thirds of these emigrants live in the United States, with other major destinations being Canada, Australia, the United Kingdom, France, and Germany.[4] Notably, even in the United States, Israelis are a tiny minority compared to the general Jewish population, which was estimated at 7.5 million in 2020 (Mitchell 2021).

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[3] Central Bureau of Statistics, "Departures and Returns in 2020 of Israelis Staying Abroad Continuously for a Year or More," 23 August 2022, accessed 19 January 2024, https://www.cbs.gov.il/he/mediarelease/DocLib/2022/399/11_22_399b.pdf.

[4] Jewish People Policy Institute, 2017 Annual Assessment, accessed 19 January 2024, https://jppi.org.il/wp-content/uploads/2017/JPPIAA2017.pdf. These figures refer to Israeli citizens (born either in Israel or elsewhere) whom the State of Israel considers as Jews according to Jewish Orthodox religious law.

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