

= Russian language in Israel =

The Russian language in Israel is spoken natively by a large proportion of the population , reaching about 20 percent of the total population by 1989 , mostly by immigrants who came from the former Soviet Union in the early 1990s and later years . It is a major foreign language in the country and is used in many aspects of life . Russian is by far the most used non @-@ official native language in Israel . The government and businesses often provide information in Russian , and it is semi @-@ official in some areas with high concentration of Russian Jewish immigrants . The Russian @-@ speaking population of Israel is the world 's third @-@ largest population of Russian native @-@ speakers living outside the former Soviet Union territories after Germany and the United States , and the highest as a proportion of the population . As of 2013 , 1 @,@ 231 @,@ 003 residents of the Post @-@ Soviet states have immigrated to Israel .

= = History = =

The first large scale immigration of Russian @-@ speaking Soviet Jews to post @-@ 1948 Israel occurred during the 1970s , but the " great migration " did not start until the late 1980s , during the last years of the Soviet Union .

About 100 @,@ 000 Jews emigrated from the Soviet Union to Israel from 1971 to 1974 . Most of them were from Georgia ; the Baltic states of Estonia , Latvia and Lithuania ; and areas annexed by the Red Army in 1939 ? 1940 , mostly Poland . Soviet authorities allowed this emigration by calling it " family reunification , " to avoid the appearance that anyone was unhappy living in the Soviet state . These emigrants held strongly Zionist views and took the opportunity to settle in their historic homeland . Less than half of those who emigrated in the 1970s wave came from Slavic countries , i.e. , Russia , Ukraine , Belarus , even though about 80 % of Soviet Jews lived there at the time .

The Soviet Union was generally anti @-@ Semitic ; Zionist activities inside its borders were considered treason that could lead to execution , and , after 1967 , Israel was considered an enemy state . It was not until Perestroika that Jewish activists were given freedom to operate . The emigration that took place from 1989 to 1993 is described as a " panic migration " , due to the socio @-@ economic crisis in the Soviet states , rather than a migration of " born @-@ again " Jews . Many of them did not have any relation to Judaism or Zionism in their former place of residence . Most immigrants of this period came from Russia and Ukraine , and to a lesser extent from Belarus and Central Asia .

The " old immigrants " of the 1970s , who mainly came to Israel for Zionist feelings , viewed people who came during the wave of the 1980s and 1990s as people escaping a harsh economic situation who did not have much appreciation for their new homeland . The last Soviet census of 1989 indicated 1 @,@ 449 @,@ 000 Jews living in the country , of which about 877 @,@ 000 had moved to Israel by October 2000 . The wave of immigration in this short period of time was the greatest influx of people to Israel since the date of its creation . Immigrants from the former Soviet Union composed 50 % ? 70 % of the newcomers . The number of people who came to Israel in the late 1980s and early 1990s outnumbered the number of people who came during the 1970s by four times , which made it harder for them to be integrated into the mainstream society of such a small country .

An estimated 250 @,@ 000 of immigrants are not halachically Jewish (which only recognises maternal descent) , but rather considered Jewish under the law of return due to having at least one Jewish grandparent , or being the spouse of Jewish immigrants who received Israeli citizenship according to the Law of Return .

= = Today = =

= = = Integration into Israeli society = = =

Although Hebrew courses are offered to every immigrant , some Russians have declined . About 26 percent of Russian immigrants do not speak fluent Hebrew . Russians often settle close to each other , forming Russian @-@ speaking neighborhoods with store window advertisements in Russian and banks with at least a few Russian @-@ speaking workers . Ashdod , the fifth largest city in Israel , absorbed a particularly large number of immigrants , accepting over 100 @,@ 000 Soviet Jews from 1990 to 2001 . The Yud @-@ Yud Gimmel neighborhoods in southern Ashdod , where immigrants account for 75 percent of the population of 26 @,@ 000 , were dubbed " Israel 's Russian ghetto " .

The process of integration into mainstream Israeli society is slow , because many Russian @-@ speaking adults prefer to not learn Hebrew and are reluctant to give up their Russian cultural background . Language professors Elana Shohamy and Bernard Spolsky attributed this to a " strong loyalty to their ethnic language " .

Hayim Gordon describes the situation in his 2007 book Israel today :

Today , Russian is in a much better position than Arabic , which is an official language in the country . The Russian @-@ speaking adult population , which is less competitive in Hebrew than the youth , mostly tries to preserve the common Russian cultural background , teaching it to their children born in Israel . However , according to Shohamy and Spolsky , second generation Israelis of Russian origin " do not receive a formal education in Russian " and , as a result , " language attrition is rapid " . Political scientist Ze 'ev Khanin opined , " The Russian @-@ speaking community is identifiable , but it is part of the Israeli collective . The second generation is much more influenced by its Israeli experience than its Soviet past . " In 2001 , camp counselors in Ashdod volunteered to help youths accommodate to Israeli lifestyle , and those that participated in the program said that " they feel Israeli in every respect " .

= = = Politics = = =

Roughly 20 percent of Israel 's population was born in Russia , and , as of 2013 , the Russian @-@ speaking community accounts for 15 percent of Israel 's eligible voters . Ze 'ev Khanin surmised that Russian Jews in Israel tend to be politically conservative , estimating that 50 to 60 percent support the Likud Beiteinu party .

Israeli journalist Lily Galili attributed this to being in part due to an unwillingness to make land concessions for the Israeli @-@ Palestinian peace process . She explained , " They come from this huge empire to this tiny Israel and they say : ' Is that all , is that the country ? And what , you want to give back the territories ? Who gives up territory in the first place ! And in this small country . You must be kidding ! ' " Russian @-@ speaking Israeli analyst Igor Khlopitsky stated that this also resulted from the Russian @-@ speaking Israelis generally wanting quick results during times of turmoil , saying , " Those who came after Perestroika had the Soviet mentality beaten out of them by the very difficult problems of the time . And where some other Israelis see the possibilities for discussion and dialogue , they just want to solve the problems swiftly . "

= = Status and usage = =

Hebrew and Arabic are the only official languages of the State of Israel .

Russian and a number of other immigrant languages are widely used in Israel , because ethnic Jews from dozens of countries from all around the world have settled in the area . Russian is the major immigrant language of Jews living in Israel . Since 1967 , millions of Russian Jews have settled in the country , and a great influx of Jews from the post @-@ Soviet states took place in the 1990s . Today , Russian is used in cultural events , the educational system and other public domains .

By 1999 , about 5 to 10 percent of all jobs in Israel were held by Russian speakers . The Ministry of Transport published booklets and manuals in Russian . It is very likely to find Russian @-@ speaking doctors at hospitals .

== Education ==

Most Jewish immigrants from the Soviet Union were highly educated with almost 45 percent of them having some kind of higher education .

Despite the fact that the native language of a significant part of the country 's population is Russian , the language occupies a modest role in Israel 's education system . Hebrew University started teaching Russian in 1962 . In public schools , the first Russian @-@ language classes were opened in the 1970s in large cities . The number of students enrolled in these programs dropped in the 1980s as immigration from the Soviet Union slowed down . In the 1990s , a Russian @-@ language program carried out by local governments called Na 'leh 16 included some 1 @, @ 500 students . In 1997 , about 120 schools in Israel taught Russian in one way or another .

== Media ==

Traditionally , Russian speakers read newspapers and listen to radio more often than Hebrew speakers .

Nasha strana was the major Russian @-@ newspaper in Israel during the 1970s , when it competed with Tribuna for the immigrant reader . In 1989 , there was only one daily in Russian , and 6 in 1996 . Since the 2000s , the number of Russian @-@ language newspapers started to decline due to the increasing number of television and online media . Israeli television provides daily translation in Hebrew , Arabic , and Russian . In 2002 , the Israeli Russian @-@ speaking commercial Channel 9 was launched . It is also known as Israel Plus . In November 2007 , a typical digital package included 45 channels in foreign languages , with 5 in Russian . Today , there are four dailies , 11 weeklies , five monthlies and over 50 local newspapers published in Russian in Israel , with a total circulation of about 250 @, @ 000 during weekends . Daily radio services in Russian are also available throughout Israel .