

# Executive Summary

Source: Based on the *2001 Census Analysis Series: Jewish Community of Calgary* by Charles Shahar (6 volumes).

## Demographics:

- Calgary has the sixth largest Jewish population in Canada, with 7,945 (or 2%) of Canada's 370,520 Jews. Toronto has 179,095 (48%); Montreal has 92,970 (25%); Vancouver has 22,595 (6%); Winnipeg has 14,775 (4%); and Ottawa has 13,455 (3.6%).
- Tiny percentage of Calgarians: The Calgary Jewish population numbered 7,945 in 2001. This constitutes 0.8% of the city's total population.
- Mostly in the Southwest: The Jewish population in Calgary is regionally concentrated in the Southwest area of the city: 5,530 of 7,945 Jews (70%) live in this region. Another 13% live in the SE sector.
- Small ethnic group: Compared to other religious and ethnic groups in Calgary, the Jewish community is relatively small: it is the 8<sup>th</sup> largest religious group and the 17<sup>th</sup> largest ethnic group.
- Slowing growth rates: The growth rate of the Jewish population between 1951 and 1991 averaged 3.1% per year, this has slowed down considerably between 1991 and 2001 to 1.0% per year.

## The Jewish Elderly

- Ageing population: The proportion of Jewish seniors in Calgary (10.6%) is higher than in the Calgary general population (8.5%) but it is lower than the proportion of seniors in the total Canadian Jewish population (16.7%). Statistical projections indicate that the Jewish senior population will double in size by 2017 (this issue is not exclusive to the Jewish community). The number of school aged children is also expected to grow but the ratio of seniors to youth will increase over the next 40 years.
- Our elderly are poorest in Canada: The median income for Calgary Jewish seniors is lower than the median income of Jewish seniors in Winnipeg, Vancouver, Montreal, and Toronto.
- Poverty: 1 in 7 senior Jews are poor in Calgary; elderly Jewish women are twice as likely to be poor as elderly men (18.7% versus 10.1%); and the average income of elderly women is half that of elderly men.
- Almost half of all senior Jewish women are single, divorced, or widowed. 1 in 3 elderly Jewish women live alone as opposed to only 1 in 10 elderly Jewish men. 1 in 5 elderly Jewish women are poor.

- There are 360 Holocaust survivors in Calgary (25% of the total Jewish population over the age of 56).
- Almost half of all seniors report experiencing some type of disability.

### **The Jewish Poor**

- 815 Jews (10.3% of the Calgary Jewish population) live below the poverty line in Calgary, down from 1,305 in 1991. The poverty level among Calgary Jews is lower than the non-Jewish population.
- The Elderly: Jewish seniors in Calgary are poorest in Canada (see above).
- Working poor: There are 285 working poor who earn wages that do not exceed the poverty line cut-off.
- Families: There are 230 poor Jewish families in Calgary.
- 105 children (0-14 years of age) live below the poverty line, 6.9% of our youth population.
- Girls between 0-14 years old are almost twice as likely as boys of the same age to be living under the poverty line. Elderly women (65+) are also more likely to be poor than elderly men.
- 1 in 3 Jewish people living alone or with non-relatives live below the poverty line.
- There are a higher proportion of poor people in the NW & NE regions of Calgary which are also the least densely populated Jewish areas of the city. This will present challenges for distributing aid & services.

### **Immigration and Language**

- The proportion of Jewish immigrants in Calgary is similar to that of the national Jewish population (1/3<sup>rd</sup>).
- Approximately two-thirds of Calgary's Jewish population was born in Canada. The next three most common countries of birth are Russia (6.6%), the United States (5.3%) and Israel (3.5%).
- Israeli immigrants have the youngest median age (24 years), whereas Jewish immigrants from Poland, Romania, and the former Czechoslovakia have the oldest median age (75 years). Almost two-thirds of immigrants from Eastern Europe are now senior citizens.
- Large immigration from Russia: The largest recent influx of immigrants have come from Russia. Between 1991 and 2001, 565 Russians arrived in Calgary, two-thirds of all immigrants who arrived during that time.
- Most common mother tongue of Calgary Jews is English (78.0%); next most common is Russian (11.2%).
- Long time to financial stability: It can take up to two-decades for some Jewish immigrants to become financially stable. The average annual income of immigrants from the USA and South America is almost twice as high as that of immigrants from Western Europe and the former Soviet Union.

### **Issues of Jewish Identity and Identification:**

- Religion & Ethnicity: (i) A majority of Jews in Calgary (4,970) consider themselves as Jewish by both religion and ethnicity. A further 1,560 say they are Jewish by religion but have another ethnic affiliation. For the purposes of this study, these 6,530 Jews were considered to have a “Higher Jewish Identification.” (ii) An additional 1,415 people say they are Jews by ethnicity but have *no* religion and this group is defined as having “Lower Jewish Identification”. (iii) Finally, another 1,790 are ethnic Jews who indicate *another* religion (e.g., Catholicism)—this latter group was not included in this report’s definition of Jewishness.
- A lower proportion of Jews are “highly identified” in Calgary (82.2%) than in Canada as a whole (89.1%). Of the large centers, identification is highest in Montreal (95.5%) and Toronto (91.9%) and lowest in Vancouver (76.5%) and Calgary (82.2%). Identification in Ottawa and Winnipeg are both around 85%.
- High identification is highest among seniors (92.9%) and the lowest in the 15-24 and 25-44 age groups (both below 80%). Identification is also much higher in the SW & SE than in the NW & NE sectors.
- Only 32% of Calgary’s Jews over 24 contribute to UJA, and only 15% of Calgary’s Jews are members at the JCC (Jewish Community Centre).
- Enrolment in Jewish day school education has declined by almost 50% in the last 15 years.

#### **Intermarriage:**

- From 1991-2001, the number of Jews living in intermarried households (including children) has increased by 51% (growing from 1,300 to 1,965). From 1981-2001, the number has increased by 120% (from 895 to 1,965)—this significantly outpaced the increase in the number of local Jews in the last two decades.
- 34% of Jewish spouses/partners in Calgary are married to non-Jews—among the highest Canada and more than double the rate in Montreal (13.1%) and Toronto (15.6%).
- Almost 40% of Jewish children <5 years of age (living in coupled families) reside in intermarried arrangements.
- Intermarriage is higher in the NE & NW sectors of the city (lower in the SW & SE); twice as high for families earning between \$100k-149k than for families earning \$25k-49k; higher for Jewish men than women; higher for common law partners than married couples; and much higher for younger adults (intermarriage is running at 80% where both spouses are less than 30 years old).
- Children of intermarried couples are far less likely to be identified as Jews: more than ¾ of children in intermarried families are not identified as belonging to the religious orientation of the Jewish spouse. Regarding the youngest children of intermarried couples, about a fifth (20.9%) are identified by their parents as Jews; almost half (48.5%) are assigned no religious affiliation; and the rest (30.6%) are identified as having other religions.

**From our cover letter to donors for the individual interviews (couple of other useful stats here—like the stat about school enrolment underscored below):**

**POVERTY:** According to the 2001 Canada Census Data, 815 Jews (10.3% of the Calgary Jewish population) live below the poverty line in Calgary. 1 in 7 **senior** Jews are poor in Calgary; and there are 230 Jewish **families** and 105 Jewish **children** living below the poverty line. Sadly, elderly Jewish **women** are twice as likely to be poor as men (18.7% versus 10.1%) and young **girls** are twice as likely as young boys to live in poverty. How important is it for us to help alleviate poverty in the Jewish community and what do you recommend we do about it?

**AFFILIATION:** According to the 2001 Canada Census Data, several trends are going to create huge challenges for the Jewish community in Calgary, e.g.,

- i. A large number of **unaffiliated** (e.g., only 32% of Calgary's Jews over 24 contribute to UJA; only 15% of Calgary's Jews are members at the Jewish Community Centre),
- ii. Enrolment in Jewish day **school** education has declined by almost 50% in the last 15 years, which not only creates funding challenges for the schools but also signals a declining engagement in the community
- iii. Declining **religious** affiliation, and
- iv. Growing rates of **intermarriage** (now at approx. 50%).