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DATA REPORT JULY 30, 2026 UPDATED AUGUST 6, 2026

How Have the Israeli and Palestinian Populations Grown, and Why Are the Numbers Disputed?

Israel grew from 2 million to over 10 million; the West Bank and Gaza from 2 million to 5.4 million. The growth, and why the counts behind it are disputed.

Demography

Population Growth

Census

Israel

Palestinian Territories



Both populations between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean have grown several times over in living memory. Israel went from about 2.1 million people in 1960 to roughly **10.1 million** in 2025; the West Bank and Gaza went from about 2 million in 1990, where continuous figures begin, to about **5.4 million**. The numbers that trace that growth come from four different authorities, Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics, the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, the World Bank, and the United Nations, that do not fully agree, and the Palestinian count in particular has been publicly disputed, with claims of both over- and under-count. This report traces the growth first, then sets out what the current counts agree on and where, and why, they part.

Key Findings

- Israel grew from about **2.1 million** in 1960 to about 10.15 million in 2025; the West Bank and Gaza from about 2 million in 1990 to about 5.4 million (World Bank; Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, 2025). Both grew severalfold, and both are now decelerating.
- The four bodies broadly agree on the current totals: Israel about **10.148 million** (Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, 2025), the West Bank and Gaza between **5.29 million** (World Bank, 2024) and 5.5 million (United Nations, 2024), a spread of roughly 0.2 million for the same territory.
- The 2017 Palestinian census counted **4,780,978** residents of the West Bank and Gaza; every total the World Bank and United Nations have published since is a projection off that benchmark, not an independent count.
- A non-peer-reviewed think-tank study argued the Palestinian population was overstated by about **1.34 million** in 2004 (Zimmerman, Seid, and Wise, 2006); the claim did not survive scrutiny, a demographer rebuilding the count from Israeli data arrived near the official figure (Zimmerman and DellaPergola, 2005), and the one peer-reviewed audit found the alleged gap a product of how the figures were handled (Lustick, 2013).
- East Jerusalem's Palestinian residents are counted inside Israel's national total by Israel's statistics office and inside the Palestinian total by the Palestinian one, the same people in two national counts.

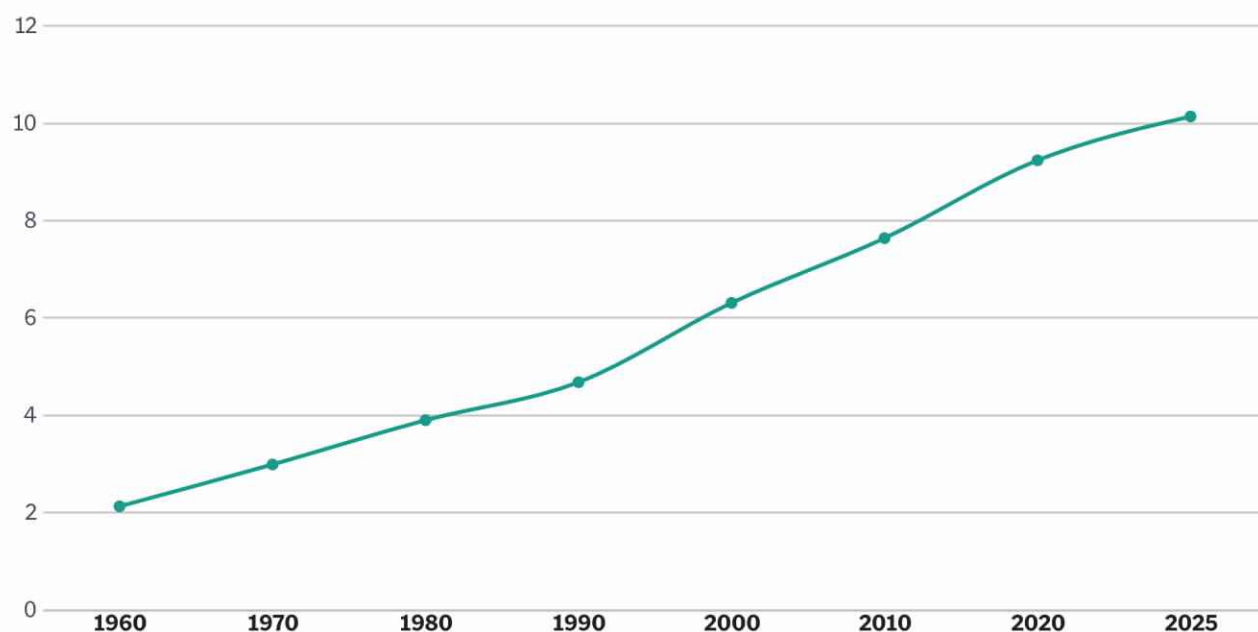
Both populations have multiplied severalfold in two generations

Israel grew from about 2.1 million in 1960 to about **10.1 million** in 2025, through a combination of a high birth rate and recurring waves of immigration; the [drivers of that growth](#) are examined in a companion report. The West Bank and Gaza, where continuous figures begin in 1990, grew from about 2 million to about **5.4 million** over the same period, almost entirely through natural increase rather than migration, as a high birth rate worked through a young population (World Bank).

Both growth rates have eased as birth rates have fallen. What the two populations do not share is a common measurement history: Israel has counted continuously since its founding, while the Palestinian figures rest on just three censuses, in 1997, 2007, and 2017, with the years between and since filled in by projection.

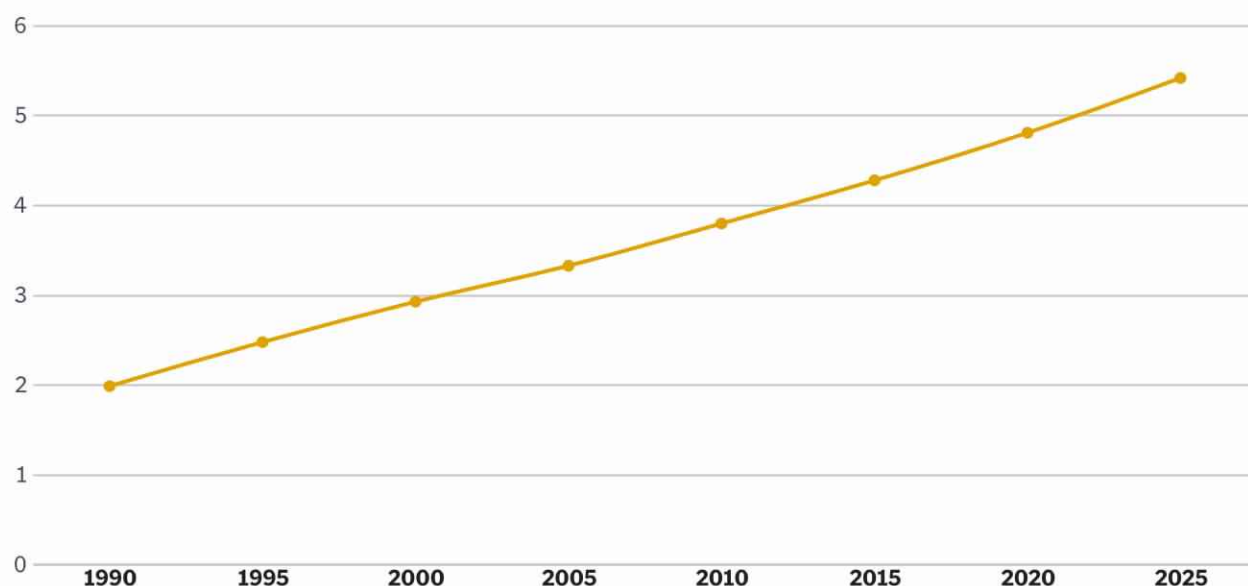
Israel's population, 1960 to 2025

TOTAL POPULATION, MILLIONS



Source: World Bank World Development Indicators. The 2025 point is provisional.

The West Bank and Gaza, 1990 to 2025

TOTAL POPULATION, MILLIONS

Source: World Bank World Development Indicators; the underlying benchmarks are the 1997, 2007, and 2017 Palestinian censuses, with the years between and since projected. The 2025 point is provisional.

What do the current counts show, and how much do they agree?

Israel counted about **10.148 million** people in September 2025, roughly 78.5% Jews and others and 21.5% Arabs (Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, 2025); the World Bank puts it close to that. For the West Bank and Gaza the answer depends on which office you read: the World Bank reports about **5.29 million** for 2024 and 5.41 million for 2025, the United Nations about 5.5 million for 2024. The two describe the identical territory under different names, the World Bank's "West Bank and Gaza" and the United Nations' "State of Palestine," and their totals differ by roughly 0.2 million because their projection methods differ, not because they count different people.

What is the count built on?

Every current Palestinian figure traces back to three censuses. The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics counted about **2.9 million** people in 1997, 3.76 million in 2007, and 4,780,978 in 2017, split into 2,881,687 in the West Bank and 1,899,291 in Gaza (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2017). The 2017 census is the benchmark beneath both international series: the World Bank and United Nations totals for every year since are projections rolled forward from it, not new head counts. There was no Palestinian census before 1997, so any earlier figure is a back-estimate, and East Jerusalem has been estimated rather than directly enumerated in each round.

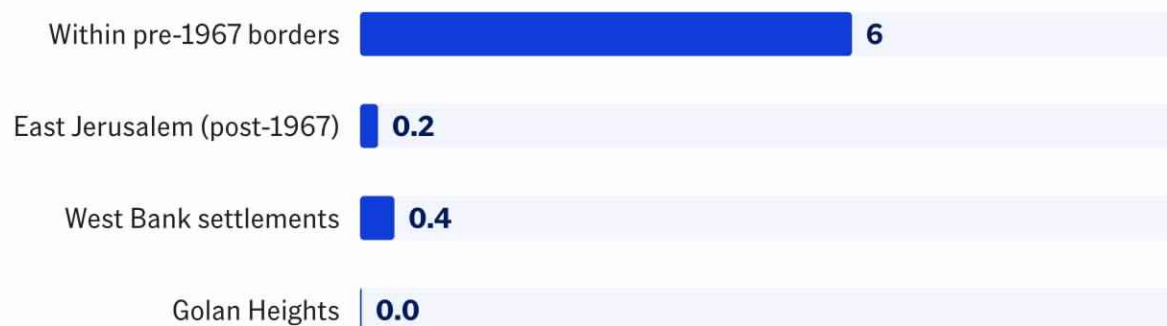
Who is counted where? East Jerusalem and the settlements

The same East Jerusalem residents are counted inside two national totals at once: Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics places them in Israel's total, and the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics places them in the Palestinian one, a definitional split rather than an arithmetic one (Hirsch-Hoefler and Ben Shitrit, 2020). Israel's total takes in both the Jewish residents of neighborhoods built in East Jerusalem since 1967 and the area's Palestinian residents, and its statistics office folded West Bank settlers into the national count between 1970 and 1997.

The scale of what turns on the choice is measurable. Reconciling the Israeli, Palestinian, and United Nations sources, the demographer Sergio DellaPergola put the Jewish population at the start of 2019 at **6,001,700** within Israel's pre-1967 borders, plus 221,800 in East Jerusalem neighborhoods incorporated after 1967 and 418,900 in West Bank settlements (DellaPergola, 2019). Whether those roughly 640,000 residents count toward "Israel" or toward "the territories" is a question of frame: the monitoring group B'Tselem, like most international bodies, uses the opposite convention from the Israeli office, counting settlers separately and treating East Jerusalem as occupied (B'Tselem). The dispute runs in both directions, and the Palestinian Authority has separately complained that the 2007 census undercounted East Jerusalem (Faitelson, 2009).

Where Israel's counted Jewish population lives

JEWISH POPULATION BY AREA OF RESIDENCE, START OF 2019, MILLIONS



Source: Sergio DellaPergola, World Jewish Population 2019 (American Jewish Year Book). Residents beyond the pre-1967 borders are counted inside Israel's total by its own statistics office; most international bodies count them separately.

Is the Palestinian population overstated?

The most publicized challenge to the Palestinian count is the claim that it is inflated by about a million. In 2004 the American-Israel Demographic Research Group argued that the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics had overstated the West Bank and Gaza population by about **1.34 million**, a claimed 2.49 million against the 3.83 million reported (Zimmerman, Seid, and Wise, 2006). It was published by a policy think tank and was not peer reviewed.

Demographers who examined the claim did not sustain it. Sergio DellaPergola, rebuilding the count from Israeli rather than Palestinian data, still arrived at about **3.3 to 3.4 million** for 2005, close to the official figure and roughly a million above the study's counter-total (Zimmerman and DellaPergola, 2005). He argued that the group's consistency checks, drawn from voter and school registration, cannot validate a census because registration is voluntary, and that the only sound test, an independent post-census survey, was never run. In the one peer-reviewed treatment, the political scientist Ian Lustick concluded that the "missing" Palestinians rest on a systematic manipulation of the data rather than a genuine over-count, and noted the claim's ties to proposals to annex much of the West Bank (Lustick, 2013). DellaPergola also observed that subtracting a million people would move the regional balance only a few points, and that the decisive long-run factor is the fertility differential, not the head count. The Palestinian statistics office rejects the claim and says it revised only its projection model, not the census counts.

Three figures for the West Bank and Gaza, mid-2000s

POPULATION, MILLIONS



Source: The official projected figure and Sergio DellaPergola's independent estimate (Zimmerman and DellaPergola, 2005) against the American-Israel Demographic Research Group's contested, non-peer-reviewed claim (Zimmerman, Seid, and Wise, 2006).

What happened to Gaza's population after October 2023?

The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics puts Gaza's population at about **2.13 million** at the end of 2025, down from roughly 2.2 million in October 2023 (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2025). It describes that end-2025 figure as about 10.6% below the level its pre-war projection had expected for the same date. The number is a net demographic estimate, combining war-related deaths, people recorded as missing, and roughly 100,000 who left the Strip; it is not a casualty count.

Only the Palestinian office publishes a Gaza-specific war-adjusted number. The United Nations does not report Gaza separately, folding conflict mortality into its wider State of Palestine projection, so any "United Nations figure for Gaza" is really a territory-wide estimate; the World Bank in turn adopts the United Nations series. All three describe the current Gaza figure as an adjusted estimate or projection under active-conflict conditions rather than a measured count, and the Palestinian office publishes it as a year-end point estimate without a confidence interval.

Gaza's population, a net demographic estimate

MILLIONS



Source: Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2025. The office puts the end-2025 estimate about 10.6% below the level its pre-war projection expected. A net demographic estimate combining deaths, missing persons, and departures, published under active-conflict conditions; not a casualty count.

Methodology and limitations

The figures here are drawn from the four bodies that produce them, the Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, the World Bank World Development Indicators, and the United Nations World Population Prospects 2024, alongside the peer-reviewed and policy literature that assesses them. Where an estimate is contested, both the claim and its documented rebuttal are cited, and the source type is named: an official statistical release, a peer-reviewed study, a think-tank report, and an advocacy-mission monitor are different kinds of evidence and are labeled as such.

Several limits bound every figure. The long-run population lines are drawn from a single source, the World Bank, for comparability; the West Bank and Gaza series begins in 1990, because no Palestinian census existed before 1997 and earlier and inter-census figures are modeled or projected rather than counted. Every West Bank and Gaza total since 2017 is a projection off that census. The West Bank and Gaza are distinct populations often reported as one, under two different names. East Jerusalem residents are attributed differently by different offices, so the same people can appear in more than one national total. The over-count study is a non-peer-reviewed think-tank publication and is treated here as a contested claim, not a measurement. The post-October-2023 Gaza figure is an adjusted estimate produced under active-conflict conditions, published without a confidence interval, and reflects a net demographic change rather than a casualty count. United Nations figures for 2024 and later are projections, not measurements. No individual is counted here; every figure is an aggregate.

Conclusion

Both populations have grown severalfold in two generations, and that growth is the uncontested part of the story. Israel counts about 10.1 million people and the West Bank and Gaza about 5.3 to 5.5 million, figures the four statistical authorities broadly share, all resting for the Palestinian side on one 2017 census. The largest challenge to those figures has not held up: a leading demographer, rebuilding the count from Israeli data, arrived close to the official number, and the one peer-reviewed audit concluded the alleged gap was a product of how the figures were handled.

The offices can count the growth; they cannot agree on what the count is for. The same East Jerusalem residents sit in two national totals, the Palestinian census figures are called basically sound by a demographer and inflated by a think-tank team, and the same population number reads as a technical estimate or a political argument depending on who holds it. On the growth and the totals, the sources are closer than the dispute suggests; on what the numbers mean, they were never going to agree.

Frequently Asked Questions

How much have the Israeli and Palestinian populations grown?

Israel grew from about 2.1 million in 1960 to about 10.1 million in 2025; the West Bank and Gaza from about 2 million in 1990 to about 5.4 million (World Bank; Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, 2025). Both grew severalfold, and both are now growing more slowly as birth rates fall.

How many Palestinians live in the West Bank and Gaza?

Between about 5.29 million (World Bank) and 5.5 million (United Nations) for 2024, for the same territory (World Bank; United Nations, 2024). Both figures are projections rolled forward from the 2017 Palestinian census, which counted 4,780,978, rather than fresh counts.

Why do the World Bank and the United Nations give different numbers?

They describe the same territory under different names, “West Bank and Gaza” and “State of Palestine,” and their totals differ by roughly 0.2 million because their projection frameworks differ, not because they count different populations (World Bank; United Nations, 2024). Both sit on top of the same 2017 census.

Is the Palestinian population inflated?

A non-peer-reviewed think-tank study argued it was overstated by about 1.34 million in 2004 (Zimmerman, Seid, and Wise, 2006), but demographers who tested the claim did not sustain it: rebuilding the count from Israeli data still lands near the official figure (Zimmerman and DellaPergola, 2005), and the one peer-reviewed treatment attributes the gap to a systematic manipulation of the data rather than a genuine over-count (Lustick, 2013).

Who counts the residents of East Jerusalem?

Both offices do. Israel’s Central Bureau of Statistics counts East Jerusalem’s residents inside Israel’s total; the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics counts the same residents inside the Palestinian total (Hirsch-Hoefler and Ben Shitrit, 2020; Faitelson, 2009). It is a definitional dispute over attribution, and it runs in both directions.

How is Gaza’s population estimated now?

The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics puts Gaza at about 2.13 million at the end of 2025, down from roughly 2.2 million in October 2023, which it describes as about 10.6% below its pre-war projection for that date (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2025). It is a net demographic estimate combining deaths, missing persons, and departures, published as a point estimate under active-conflict conditions, and it is not a casualty count.

When was the last Palestinian census?

2017, with a reference date of 1 December (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2017). Every West Bank and Gaza total published since is a projection off it, so no figure after 2017 is an independent head count.

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