



**Israel Society**

***The Russian Immigrants***  
***Comparison of the Immigration of Russians***  
***to Israel, the United States of America and***  
***Germany***  
***since 1948***

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## Introduction to Russian Immigration

*“In the 1990s ethnic Germans and Jews comprised the largest components of emigration [out of the FSU], and the most attractive destinations were Germany, Israel and the United States, ...”* (Valery Tishkov, 2005, p. 15).

However, Israel, the United States of America, and Germany are different countries, with different histories, different cultures, different types of political directions, and different life-styles. Of course it would be expected that these differences influenced the integration of the migrants coming from Russia during this time, but were the immigration experiences of Russians to Israel, the United States of America (USA or US) and Germany comparable or drastically different? What were the causes of similarities or differences and what were the influences of the immigrants on these three countries? Assessing how different countries worked to accept and assimilate the same cultural group over the same time period could help one to better understand how the host countries look at immigration in general.

## The Immigration of Russians to Israel<sup>1</sup>

### **Groups of Immigrants and Size of Population.**

Israel experienced two periods of influx of Russian immigration. The first period was during the 1950s/1960s and the second was in the 1990s. A much larger number of immigrants arrived in the latter period. In fact, in the years after the breakdown of the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), from 1989 until 2014, approximately 1.3 million (Mio) immigrants traveled to Israel. Of this number about 75% (1.035.000) came from the Former Soviet Union (FSU). About 50% of the 1 Mio Former FSU citizens came from Russia (352.000) and the Ukraine (334.000), with the remaining immigrants coming from the other states of the former USSR. Thus the largest number of immigrants from the USSR during this time period was originated in Russia. Of the 1.3 Mio immigrants, 53% were women and more than 50% were under the age of 44. The estimated number of this original group still living in Israel is about 885.000

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<sup>1</sup> The main facts of this chapter rely on the lectures of Prof. Vladimir Khhanin (Khanin, 2016) and Dr. Michael Philippov (Philippov, 2016).

### **Support for Immigration.**

The immigration of Russians to Israel was supported by a variety of aspects with the main advantage being for the Russian Jewish immigrants to immigrate and make Aliyah, the return to the promised Eretz Israel. Due to this commonality, the Russian Jews had a high rate of cohesion with the main Jewish population. A second advantage for Russians to immigrant to Israel was that this group was supported by the state, especially financial (Absorption Basket<sup>2</sup>). Additionally, the Russian immigrants offered a high number of qualified workers, to some degree even better than the average Israeli worker. In Israel almost all Russian qualifications were accepted. In some fields tests had to be done; however, all in all it was theoretically easy for immigrants to get access to the labor market. Russians were willing to work, even in less paid jobs. Of course Russians wished to maintain their original occupations; *“however, one reads in the press many accounts of Soviet doctors, musicians, and professionals being willing to undertake any work in a wide range of other fields as long as they have a job”* (Tabory, 1992, p. 271). Due to the fact that Russians came from a life where they were used to coping with difficulty they were quite flexible with the job market available. This proved that Russian immigrants were also willing to integrate themselves. Although 2/3 of them came from larger towns in the FSU, 3/4 of them now live in smaller cities in Israel, an attempt to avoid living in Russian ghettos. Finally, immigration to Israel became even more attractive in 1989 when the USA stopped financing immigration to the USA thus decreasing the number of visas for Russian Jews to the US. From an Israeli point of view, Israel quickly became a main destination<sup>3</sup>.

### **Integration.**

Although used to integrating people, the immigration of about 1 Mio new Jews was, for a small country like Israel, a big challenge with a high possibility of huge impacts on society<sup>4</sup> and the outcome might not be all for good. Positively, the influx of Russian Jews changed the numerical ratio between the Jews and the Arabs in Israel in support for the Jews; however, the immigration led to shortages of already limited resources like

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<sup>2</sup> See (Ministry of Aliyah, 2017; Berger, 2011).

<sup>3</sup> See (Lazin, 2005, p. 268).

<sup>4</sup> See (Tabory, 1992).

housing. This induced tensions with the already established population<sup>5</sup>. Such shortages were especially difficult after the economically “Lost Decade” from 1975 to 1985, from which the economy was just beginning to recover.

Although in a lot of cases well educated, the Russian immigrants became, to some extent, the Israeli proletariat due to the high unemployment rate in the beginning of the 1990s, i.e. they worked mostly in factories and were willing to work more manually. Couple this with the fact that the cost of living in Israel was quite high; income and money were crucial points<sup>6</sup>. Additionally, due to the system in the FSU, Russian migrants were missing social skills for the labor market, like the ability to search and apply for work. Therefore, a quick integration in the qualified labor market was partly hindered.

Unemployment and the fact that 1/3 of the immigrant population was over 44 years old also led to limited time and resources to invest in pension savings. Immigrants realized there would be almost no chance to support their children financially. This was reinforced by the fact that immigrants were missing the support of their own family for themselves who stayed in the FSU. They had to build not only a life but their own family community as well. Although, more than the half of the immigrants were women and in the age of a possible marriage, the family community was built almost solely by marrying inside the own community, thus widening the gap with the Non-Russian communities.

Important for integration are also language skills. According to Prof. Vladimir Khanin<sup>7</sup> and the studies of the Ministry of Aliyah and Immigrant Absorption almost 75% of the immigrants still speak only or mostly Russian at home and about 50% speak Russian more than half the time at work. Therefore, it is not astonishing that, even today, 74% are interested in Russian-language media and friends are mostly sought in the own community.

Almost 90% of the Russian immigrants politically fall in the center or to the right, so it was expected that they were probably quite able to cope with the political tendencies in Israel. However, due to their kind of ‘Soviet political culture’ it was difficult to cope with terms like democracy, opposition and participation of the citizens in politics<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> See (Tabory, 1992, p. 268f).

<sup>6</sup> See (Tabory, 1992, p. 271).

<sup>7</sup> See (Khanin, 2016).

<sup>8</sup> See (Tabory, 1992, p. 274).

Another tension arose from the high percentage of non-religious Jews<sup>9</sup> among them. Secular immigrants clashed with the religious immigrants because of the limited support to immigrants as a whole. Additionally Russian immigrants felt not wanted because of a lot of the stereotypes associated with them like the cause for rising crimes, less social housing, etc. Around 200.000 left again, taking the mostly young and well educated. There was also tension among the immigrants themselves due to the spread of origin in the FSU. Especially the position to some political activities differed, e.g. in the phase of the Russian-Ukraine-war, thus causing conflict within the immigrant group itself.

There were struggles with the immigration process within the immigrant group itself as well as how it was handled by Israel and Israelis. However, when compared to the other nations in this report, immigration of Russians into Israel was definitely not a failure and might even be called a successful immigration<sup>10</sup>.

## Immigration of Russians to the United States of America

### **Groups of Immigrants and Size of Population.**

The United States has experienced several waves of ‘Russian-speaking’ and ‘Jewish’ immigration in the past. Since 1948 Russian-speaking Jews have arrived in two major waves with about 30% entering before 1989 and the other 70% after. During this period the population of immigrants to the United States is generally estimated at about 700,000.<sup>11</sup> Following the Second World War, during the Soviet era, emigration from the USSR was severely restricted. From 1948 to 1970, a limited number of defectors made their way to the United States. Due to international pressure, in 1970 the Soviet Union temporarily loosened restrictions mainly for Jewish families. It is estimated that approximately 250,000 people were able to escape the country in this window.<sup>12</sup> During this window of opportunity, most of this population chose the United States as their destination and was given political refugee status for entry. Then, beginning in 1985,

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<sup>9</sup> They called themselves Jews, but were not really practicing it or taking part in the active community living in their synagogue.

<sup>10</sup> See i.a. (Smootha, 2008).

<sup>11</sup> See (Berger, 2011).

<sup>12</sup> See (Alexeyeva, 1992).

Mikhail Gorbachev's political reforms prompted an increase of economic immigration to the United States. From 1989 forward, 655,382 Former Soviet Union immigrants made their way to America.<sup>13</sup> Of these 410,000 were settled by the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) and believed to be Jewish.<sup>14</sup> Unlike past waves, this post-1989 immigrant population mainly settled in major metro areas, either in the inner cities or in affluent suburbs of New York, New Jersey, Massachusetts, and California.<sup>15</sup>

Originally, this population was unique in that they were highly skilled artists, athletes, and musicians. As FSU political reforms took root, the number of those emigrating from the area grew sharply. With this exodus more highly educated immigrants arrived in the US, a high percentage of which were scientists and engineers who had very few economic prospects in the Soviet Union. After the fall of the Soviet Union, the US policy of blanket political refugee status was narrowed and generally only granted for requests of family reunion.<sup>16</sup> Following the 9/11 terror attacks, the United States' immigration policy became significantly more restrictive toward all immigration but not before the United States' Russian Jewish population was second only to that of Israel.<sup>17</sup> In 2015, it was estimated that the Russian speaking population in the United States was 915,000.<sup>18</sup>

### **Support for Immigration.**

During the Cold War, due to ideological differences, pressure for Jewish emigration from the Soviet Union became a part of the United States foreign relations focus. Despite these policy efforts, the U.S. integration of Soviet Jewish refugees after 1989 was characterized primarily by local volunteer support without government assistance. Working-age immigrants received no state support, and the benefits available via Jewish organizations were rather limited.<sup>19</sup> Integration was mainly a private organizational effort, which varied greatly depending on the location of resettlement within the United States. The American Jewish community assumed a huge role in the resettlement

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<sup>13</sup> See (Department of Homeland Security, 2015).

<sup>14</sup> See (Berger, 2011).

<sup>15</sup> See (Lazin, 2005).

<sup>16</sup> See (Jewish People Policy Institute).

<sup>17</sup> See (Kliger, 2004).

<sup>18</sup> See (United States Bureau of the Census, 2015).

<sup>19</sup> See (Cohen, Haberfield, & Kogan, 2010).

initiative titled Operation Exodus. The HIAS dispersed the population across America.<sup>20</sup> This ‘tough love’ approach at times provided federal monetary support to local efforts and organizations but very little made it to individuals. These new immigrants financially were on their own. As with all immigrants to the US, the “*Soviet Jews that arrived in the U.S. did not receive direct state support outside of standard welfare and Medicare aid*” (Remennick, *Russian Israelis: Social Mobility, Politics and Culture*, 2011). To better support one another, FSU immigrants developed communal areas called ‘little Russians’, which mirrored the Soviet lifestyle culturally and linguistically, yet with the opportunities of America. Due to the American immigration process, it is safe to say that integration varied greatly depending on resettlement sites across the country

Unlike Israel, who grants citizenship to Jewish immigrants upon arrival, the United States requires at least five years of residency before application for naturalization. That being said, the lack of citizenship does not hinder labor market options of immigrants who are in a legal status and hold a ‘Green Card’. Immigrants during this time period were expected to overcome enormous challenges and become Americans. Even with these seemingly overwhelming barriers, when the doors were open a flood of highly educated FSU immigrants chose to move to the United States. These highly skilled immigrants preferred to go where the monetary returns on skills and education were higher.

### **Integration.**

National policies and approaches to immigrant integration affect the speed, experience, and perception of the experience for both the immigrant and existing population.<sup>21</sup> The Russian-speaking Jewish immigrants prior to the fall of the Soviet Union integrated relatively quickly into American society. The large majority of them were refugees leaving at the earliest opportunity and entered America with very little desire to return to the Soviet Union. Granting immediate refugee status to the population by the US created a situation similar to Israel’s right of return. Historical evidence suggests that during this period those with higher existing education levels chose the US over Israel, received

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<sup>20</sup> See (Orleck, 1999).

<sup>21</sup> See (Bodner, 2012).



minimal government and little direct private assistance, experienced a significantly more difficult initial period, but assimilated economically and socially at a faster rate. “*Psychologically prepared for permanent settlement no matter the hardships, many prepared themselves prior to leaving by learning English, preparing professionally, and accumulating knowledge about America,*” (Kliger, 2004) a process sociologist Robert Merton has called “*anticipatory socialization*” (Kliger, 2004) On average, by 1996, the income, as a group, of those who arrived in the 70’s had exceeded the American national average.<sup>22</sup>

However, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, FSU immigrants to the US were a different population. To a high degree they left due to economic and state collapse. This population’s experience in the USSR had not been such that it would take the first opportunity to leave no matter the consequences. It was also different in its geographic composition. It included large numbers of non-Western Jews, such as Bukharian, Georgian and Mountain Jews.<sup>23</sup> In contrast with earlier wave immigrants with stronger ideological beliefs who fought to leave, it can be assumed that many of this group came from successful professional backgrounds and were not in a rush to leave behind their Russian identities for new cultural realities. For most leaving their homes meant a significant downgrade in their economic and professional standing. It would mean experiencing just what so many immigrants before them did – a struggle in the years immediately following their arrival in the country.

Although this group of immigrants’ transition took a slightly longer road, the results were just as astonishing as earlier waves. Across the board, there is a high level of overall satisfaction: 64% of those who have lived in America for nine years or more say they are completely or mostly satisfied with life here.<sup>24</sup> In fact, though FSU immigrants still earn below the native-born American Jews, the population is advancing rapidly<sup>25</sup>. Young, Russian-speaking Jews with advanced university degrees and fluent English earn at the same level as their American-born peers. Older members of the community, as should be expected, have had a more difficult time, but they have helped pave the way for

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<sup>22</sup> See (Galperin, 1996) and Appendix. Table A1.

<sup>23</sup> See (Strizhevskaya & Knopp, 2004).

<sup>24</sup> See (Kliger, 2004).

<sup>25</sup> For more details concerning wages see Appendix, Table A1.

their children's successes. They, as a whole, have pushed their children to study hard and succeed. As a group their focus on reality and outcomes is part of the immigrant group's makeup as illustrated by their high level of educational attainment. "*Their 14.8 years of schooling,*" a study by Barry Chiswick discloses, "*exceed those of foreign born men in general (11.7 years), native-born men (13.1 years) and even Asian immigrant men (14.3 years)*" (Chiswick, 1997). These Russian Jewish immigrants did "*more than merely assimilate; they also transform[ed]*" (Remennick, *Russian Jews on Three Continents: Identity, Integration, and Conflict*, 2007). This is evidenced by the fact that today 40% (over half of all male participants) work in information technology, and over half (more than 70% of males) in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mechanic) fields – a far higher percentage than among native-born Jews in the US.<sup>26</sup> It is clear that these Russian-speaking immigrants strived to better their educational and professional situation as fast as possible.

## **Immigration of Russians to Germany<sup>27</sup>**

### **Groups of Immigrants and Size of Population.**

From the 1950s until recently, Russian immigrants to Germany were divided into the following groups:

1. Ethnic Russians;
2. Russians with German roots (called *Aussiedler*);
3. Russian Jews; and
4. Immigrants for other reasons (i.e. legal aliens, marriage with a German, political asylum seekers, students, workers).

Clearly immigration of Russians to Germany occurred for a wide variety of reasons from primarily 'patriotic idealism' (*Aussiedler*) and economic motives to social aspects and fear of racism and suppression as well as for religious reasons<sup>28</sup>. No exact details could

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<sup>26</sup> See (Liakhovitski, 2004).

<sup>27</sup> Like in the part about Israel the term Russian includes all migrants from the Former Soviet Union and is only used to ease the writing.

<sup>28</sup> To give exact numbers is to some degree quite difficult due to the circumstance that some immigrants stated more than one reason for their immigration to Germany. For additional information see (Bundeszentrale, 2012).

be found for groups 1 and 4 leaving further evaluation and comparison of them irrelevant; therefore, groups 2 and 3 were the divisions used for analysis.

The further explanations are based on the following numbers of immigrants arriving from the Former Soviet Union (FSU) to Germany. The *Aussiedler* (group 2) was the largest group out of the total number. From 1950 to 2017 approximately 4.5 Mio Russians came to Germany; around 3.2 Mio of them are still there<sup>29</sup>. In this period the main part came in the years 1992 to 2007 when almost 2 Mio, mainly Russian and Kazakhs<sup>30</sup>, arrived in Germany. Other numbers go in the same direction and state that from 1950 to 1996 approximately 3.6 Mio *Aussiedler* came to Germany, with peaks in 1990 (almost 400.000) and 1994 (213.214)<sup>31</sup>.

Due to the high number of immigrants in the late 1980s and early 1990s, a first limitation took place in 1993, then quotes were introduced. In 1996 Germany introduced an obligatory language test, which significantly reduced the number of immigrants again. Since 2006 the number has decreased constantly, and the number is assumed to eventually reach zero because of the legal regulations<sup>32</sup>. The decreasing levels of immigration have now led to a rise of the average age of the immigrant making this group the oldest group of immigrants in Germany.

The number of Jews in Germany after the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War was around 15.000 and by the late 1980s around 30.000 in West Germany<sup>33</sup>. In the period from 1989 to 2012 about 225.000 Jews from FSU (group 3) came to Germany<sup>34</sup>.

### **Support for Immigration.**

Germany supported the immigration of Russians in a variety of ways. A primary mode of support was Article 116 Grundgesetz (GG, German Basic Law)<sup>35</sup> and the Law on Disputes and Refugees (Gesetz über die Angelegenheiten der Vertriebenen und Flüchtlinge, Bundesvertriebenengesetz / BVFG), which deals with the right of former German citizens (*Aussiedler*) who lived until then in the FSU. This is to some degree

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<sup>29</sup> See (Garschagen, 2015) and (Susanne Worbs, 2013, p. 7).

<sup>30</sup> See (Ghelli, 2014).

<sup>31</sup> See (Kogan, 2010, p. 94).

<sup>32</sup> See (Susanne Worbs, 2013, p. 21).

<sup>33</sup> See (Kranz, 2016, p. 8).

<sup>34</sup> See (DataBank, 2013, p. 30).

<sup>35</sup> See (Bundestag, 2012).

comparable with the Law of Return in Israel. In some years more Russian Jews opted for Germany instead of Israel, which led to an intervention by the Israeli government to impede the immigration<sup>36</sup>.

Another fact supporting immigration to Germany was the large financial support provided by the state to the immigrants, Jews or no-Jews.<sup>37</sup> Additionally, many of the immigrants were able to speak German or Yiddish, and in most cases the migrants were well educated. In fact, 96% finished school and had an apprenticeship<sup>38</sup>. This education structure led to the fact that these immigrants were highly represented in the middle field of the income structure.

The Settlement program for Jewish immigrants (quota refugee status<sup>39</sup>) gave them a special status and by that they gained much more support like other immigrants groups, almost equivalent to the status of an *Aussiedler*.<sup>39</sup> The Russian Jews also gained additional support through the Jewish Community<sup>40</sup>. Although Germany was the land of the Shoa, it became more and more attractive for Third Generation Jews<sup>41</sup> because of its high standard of living, similar culture in comparison to Israel<sup>42</sup>, a high level of economic stability, and less dangerous security estimation.<sup>43</sup>

### **Integration.**

The main integration worked well as a result of the aforementioned supportive elements. The advantage of knowing the German language was of utmost importance; where there was no language advantage and other social skills missing, problems arose.<sup>44</sup> Of course integration in the early years, due to an economic miracle in Germany, was much easier, but after the 1973 oil crisis it became more difficult<sup>45</sup>.

Although there are no clear signs that Russian immigrants highly segregated themselves from the German population, in some areas there was a development of

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<sup>36</sup> See (Kranz, 2016, p. 12).

<sup>37</sup> For more detail concerning funds provided, see Appendix, Table A2.

<sup>38</sup> See (Susanne Worbs, 2013, p. 46).

<sup>39</sup> See (Kogan, 2010, p. 94).

<sup>40</sup> See (Kranz, 2016, p. 9).

<sup>41</sup> See (Kranz, 2016, p. 6).

<sup>42</sup> For more details about a 'culture shock' of Russian Immigrants see (Tabory, 1992, p. 275).

<sup>43</sup> See (Kranz, 2016, p. 13).

<sup>44</sup> See (Kogan, 2010, p. 114).

<sup>45</sup> See (Kogan, 2010, p. 93).

Russian communities. However, living in special neighborhoods hindered a quick and full integration, especially when the immigrants stuck to the Russian language. Due to the importance of the family for the daily life<sup>46</sup>, marriages were mostly confined to their own group,<sup>47</sup> which limited integration even more. Although Russian Jews were not especially prone to living in purely Russians neighborhood,<sup>48</sup> they did prefer smaller and middle-size town<sup>49</sup> in order to maintain a special way of life.

Identity problems were also an issue for an unhindered integration. For some immigrants, identification with the Russian identity was so strong that integration failed<sup>50</sup>. The use of mostly Russian TV channels as the main medium can be seen as one sign for this<sup>51</sup>.

A high level of prejudices by native Germans was as well not conducive. Rumors about a high Russian criminality are still en vogue, although it can be assumed that criminality was more a matter of economic situation vs. an ethnical reason<sup>52</sup>. In this respect it has to be mentioned that immigration of groups of different states out of the FSU led to rivalry and (criminal) problems in Germany<sup>53</sup>.

Integration in the German labor market was and is for all immigrants difficult,<sup>54</sup> even if the immigrant group possesses a high level of education.<sup>55</sup> However, Russian immigrants of the 1990s seemed to understand that education is a key to integration. *“Aussiedler do fare somewhat better than non-Western immigrants in Germany..., but fail to match Western immigrants...”* (Kogan, 2010, p. 113). Unfortunately, with the prejudices, even higher education could not solve all problems: *“German employees seem to be skeptical about suitability of Aussiedler, even those with high-level qualifications”* (Kogan, 2010, p. 113). Still, some German natives are unable to cope with refugees thus promoting right wing political streams, violence and attacks against refugees and

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<sup>46</sup> See (Susanne Worbs, 2013, p. 9).

<sup>47</sup> See (Susanne Worbs, 2013, p. 128ff).

<sup>48</sup> See (Kranz, 2016, p. 7).

<sup>49</sup> See (Susanne Worbs, 2013, p. 8).

<sup>50</sup> See (Ghelli, 2014).

<sup>51</sup> See (Susanne Worbs, 2013, p. 9).

<sup>52</sup> This is not only true for Russian Immigrants to Germany but also for Russian immigrants to Israel. See (Tabory, 1992, p. 271).

<sup>53</sup> See (Kranz, 2016, p. 12).

<sup>54</sup> See (Kogan, 2010).

<sup>55</sup> See (Susanne Worbs, 2013, pp. 7-8).

migrants<sup>56</sup>. It is interesting that especially *Aussiedler*, when compared with other migration groups, are less politically active, though when involved they tend to prefer the conservative (almost right) sector<sup>57</sup>.

## **Comparison of Immigration of Russians to Israel vs. to the USA and Germany**

To look at all three countries the similarities and differences must first be clearly defined. The similarities of immigration of Russians to Israel, the United States of American, and Germany are as follows:

1. None of the host countries' languages were the immigrants' native tongue.
2. None of the host countries would accept education and experience claims without documentation.
3. Israel and Germany settled the immigrants in large groups geographically.
4. Israel and the US's policies / citizenship policies did not hinder employment market options.
5. Israel and Germany provided generous fiscal assistance packages<sup>58</sup>.

Differences among the three immigration locations consisted of the following:

1. Unlike Israel, the United States and Germany required a substantial waiting period for naturalization (5 and 7 years respectively).
2. The US, as a federal policy, provides very little financial assistance.
3. Israel's portion of this population was older and more religious than those of the other two nations.
4. Immigrants sought life in Israel for more religious reasons vs. those in the US and Germany.
5. The number of immigrants arriving changed the percentage of the population more significantly in Israel vs. the US and Germany – increased the number of inhabitants as well as the Jewish population in Israel.

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<sup>56</sup> See (Garschagen, 2015).

<sup>57</sup> See (Susanne Worbs, 2013, p. 118ff).

<sup>58</sup> See (See Appendix A2).

For most of these similarities and differences, further study is required to draw conclusions; however, two areas, “material assistance” and “labor market regulations,” can be illuminating. As mentioned above, Israel and Germany both provided generous financial, training, and language support to new arrivals while the US did not. Secondly, Israel and the US limited economic / labor market participation to a much smaller degree than did Germany. Germany’s aid was by far the most generous and longest lasting compared to that of Israel (second most generous) and the United States. Over time immigrants to Germany, despite labor market regulations were able to exceed the earnings of those who chose Israel as their destination. This could be due to the longer duration of benefits, as it would allow individuals to find the best education/experience job fit as opposed to accepting more menial employment to survive and provide for one’s family.

Even with these policies, skilled immigrants chose the United States at the higher rate. Although solid conclusions cannot be drawn, it seems that this population was drawn to the ‘idea’ of the US and its perceived higher return on skills. The group seemed to accept the loss of generous material assistance in order to obtain the ‘idea’ of the US. In addition, it is possible that the relative size of the US economy and the dispersion of the Russian immigrant population across the entire country accelerated the assimilation of this population even though it may have caused initial animosity. In all three locations family was a source of safety, so the development of ‘unique enclaves’ of ‘little Russias’ or small, close-knit communities helped the immigrants feel safe and secure. This was seen somewhat in Germany but was more prevalent in Israel; however, it limited assimilation for the immigrants. Complete social assimilation was and is an unrealistic goal or expectation. In fact, today, through the Internet, immigrants who leave their homes looking for economic opportunity as opposed to escaping oppression, have many more opportunities to remain in contact with and abreast of the developments in their former homeland. The idea of possibly returning is most likely not viewed the way it was by past waves.

Immigrants to each country took very different routes and underwent varied experiences. Ethnic autonomy was much more pronounced in both Israel and Germany even though all three of these populations, have to a large extent, retained their culture

and language. Each nation saw varying degrees of assimilation into society. Across all three destination, the population as a whole identified itself as Jewish in the ethnic rather than religious manner. The populations in Germany and the United States were more politically conservative (American definition) than existing populations in those countries, and were very supportive of 'Israel' as a part of their identity; however these immigrants did not choose Israel as their destination. This population is much more likely (especially in the United States) to marry outside of the Jewish community. Further study is required to understand more of the dynamics that inspired destination choices, efficient and affordable integration policies, and finally effective assimilation incentives.

One fact remains, however, FSU immigrants, as a group, value education and are success oriented. Over time they will continue to be valuable additions to each of the countries discussed.



## **Conclusion**

Each of the three nations, Israel, the United States of America, and Germany welcomed the Russians immigrants. All the nations provided assistance at varying levels in order to help the immigrants assimilate and feel at home in the host nation. The effects that immigration had on all three nations were, to some degree, comparable. Each nation saw an increase in its educated workforce and had new citizens who attempted to become part of their new homeland. Missing language skills led to similar results across the board with them hampering the assimilation of immigrants into mainstream society.

Russian immigrants knew hardship in the FSU and sought a better, safer life elsewhere. They wanted to be free to worship, live, thrive, and be secure in their new homes. Israel, the United States, and Germany offered them this opportunity. The doors were opened and sometimes monetary incentives provided. It was up to the immigrants as to how and if they would take the opportunity afforded them. Today the Russian immigrants who accepted the chance to live in these nations have become, for the most part, productive, contributing members of society.

## Appendix

Tables indicating wages earned by immigrants and benefits provided to immigrants in order to clearly illustrate the similarities and differences of the immigration experience of Russians to Israel, the USA, and Germany.

**Table A1 - Ratios of Mean Earnings of Jewish Immigrants from the FSU to Mean Earnings of Natives, by Country of Destination**

	Men		Women	
	1979	1989	1979	1989
<i>United States (1975–1979 arrivals)</i>				
All Non-Hispanic whites	0.694	1.119	0.883	1.276
Whites bachelor's degree	0.626	0.930	0.774	1.102
Whites no bachelor's	0.626	0.891	0.841	1.044
<i>Israel (1978–1983 arrivals)</i>				
Asian/African origin	1.050	1.050	1.069	1.232
European origin	0.654	0.659	0.831	0.899
European bachelor's	0.738	0.746	0.883	0.957
European no bachelor's	0.580	0.579	0.756	0.798

Notes: Data are for wage and salary workers who were aged 25–50 in 1979 for the United States or in 1983 for Israel. Data for Israel (monthly earnings) are based on analyses of the Israeli censuses for 1983 and 1995. In 1995 immigrants were aged 37–62. Data for the United States (annual earnings) are based on the 5% PUMS (Public Use Microdata System) of the U.S. censuses of 1980 and 1990. Each cell is based on at least 100 immigrants.

This comparison between the relative earnings of like FSU immigrants shows the 10-17 earnings curves of these groups. After a challenging start, there is rapid improvement in

relative earnings in the United States as opposed to Israel for both men and women. One could infer that the relative education of the group prior to entry, the size of the relative population to the existing economy, and the flexibility and/or dynamism of each economy played significant roles. A few facts seem clear; during this period Jewish immigrants from the FSU to the United States were of significantly higher educational level and experience and enjoyed faster rates of earnings assimilation in their new destination than their counterparts who immigrated to Israel.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, when the US changed its refugee policy by only accepting family reunification requests, the ‘natural experiment’ was changed and was no longer a comparison of similar situations. Outcomes were the same; however, it would be difficult to draw causal relationships.

*Source:* (Haberfield, 2007) and (Jewish Agency for Israel, 2003)

**Table A2 - Material benefits to Jewish immigrants in Germany and Israel.**

<u>Material assistance to immigrants</u>	<u>Germany</u>	<u>Israel</u>	<u>Ratio</u>
First year	70,660	86,576	0.82
First 5 years	353,300	105,008	3.4
First 10 years	706,600	105,008	6.8
Income and earnings (entire population)			
Average monthly earnings	16,750	7,078	2.3
Monthly minimum wage	11,140	3,355	3.3
Average household income	30,625	14,450	2.1
Monthly income families on public assistance	5,888	2,808	2.1

(figures in Israeli NIS) 2003; 1Euro = 5 NIS

*Source:* (Jewish Agency for Israel, 2003).

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