

Israeli Settlements in the Palestinian territories (the West Bank and East Jerusalem): drives for population growth and movement

Introduction

About two decades after it was established in 1948, the state of Israel started a settlement project in of the Palestinian territories—the West Bank and Gaza Strip¹—that were occupied during the 1967 war. This settlement project is unceasingly resisted by the Palestinians and continues to incite a lot of debate among the Israeli public and internationally—the most common argument being that the settlements are a major obstacle in achieving a peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinians. This study explores the dynamics of the population of the Israeli settlers over almost five decades aiming to explicate the conditions, factors, and structures that enable maintaining such a project. Specifically, it examines the relative contribution of internal migration and natural increase to the enormous growth of the population of settlers, investigates possible reasons for the increasing fertility rates among this population, and discusses various factors, ideological and structural, that keep feeding the impulse of settlement over five decades.

Because the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza is one of the primary reasons for political struggle between Israel and the Palestinians, statistics and

¹ During the 1967 war, Israel occupied other territories and started settlement projects in them, too: the Sinai Peninsula which was returned to Egypt after the 1979 peace agreements and the Golan Heights where Israeli settlement continues. The few settlements in Gaza Strip were dismantled in 1995 limiting the settlement to the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

information about the settlements in these territories are at best controversial. Therefore, we use data from different sources: the Israeli Bureau of Statistics, the Palestinian Statistical Office, other Israeli sources in addition to our calculations. In part of the analysis we separate between settlements in East Jerusalem and those in the West Bank or present data only for settlements in the West Bank; this is not because of our believe that these are two different types of settlements, but because of data constraints. Israel considers the settlements in and around East Jerusalem as neighborhoods belonging to the city of Jerusalem, and therefore statistics about these settlements that are independent from the rest of the city of Jerusalem cannot be always found. (In contrast, because settlements in the West Bank are considered “normal” Israeli localities, the Statistical Office publishes detailed information about each settlement).

Population growth

The population of settlers in the West Bank and East Jerusalem has been continuously growing (see graph 1). Till the early 1990s this population counted less than 200 thousand settlers, about 73 thousands in the West Bank and 118 thousands in East Jerusalem. Today they number more than 600 thousands, reaching close to 10% of the Jewish population of Israel. The average annual growth rate of this population over the period 1993-2013 is 3.4%, and it is significantly higher in the West Bank, 5.3%, than in East Jerusalem, 1.5%.

Compared to the population growth in other Israeli districts, the highest rates are recorded in the settlements (named by Israeli Bureau of Statistics as the district of “Judea and Samira”). For example, between 2000 and 2013, the average annual

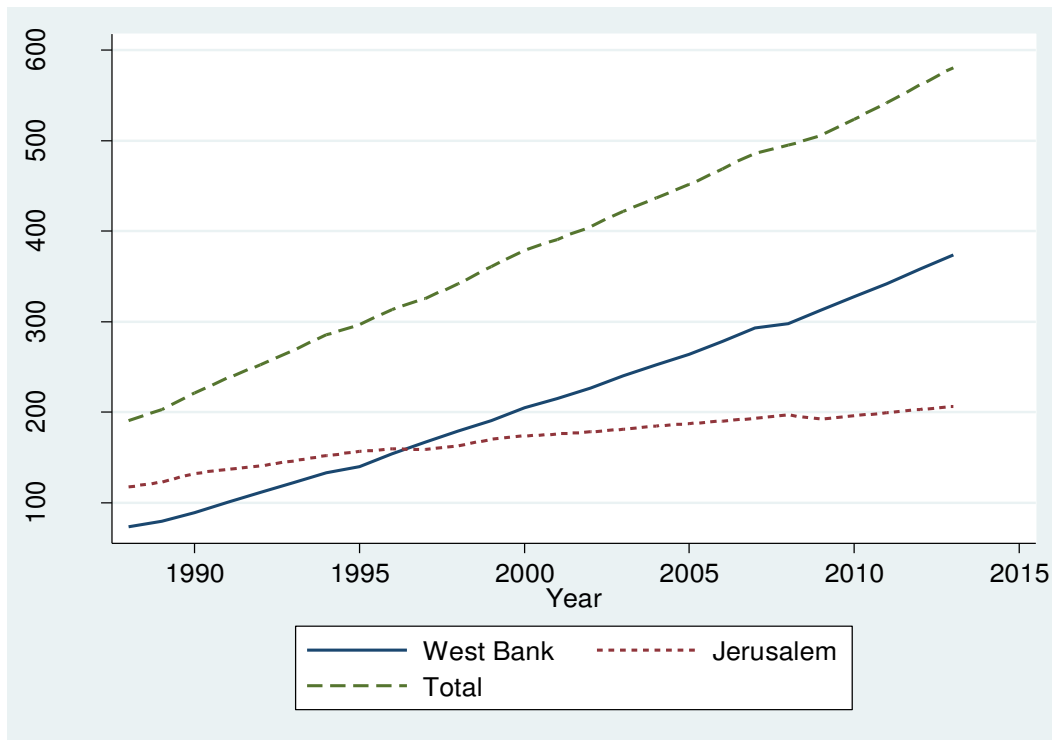
growth rate in the settlements was 4.5% compared to 2.3% in the center district, the second highest district in terms of population growth (see table 1).

The population growth of the Israeli settlements is contributed by two different factors: natural increase and internal migration of residents of other districts to the settlements. The relative contribution of each factor to the total population growth has changed over time. From the start of the settlement process in 1967 to the late 1990s, the settlers' population increased primarily as a result of internal migration. After the late 1990s, we a gradual decrease in the relative contribution of migration occur. This happens due to a recent decrease in the absolute number of immigrants, from close to 7,500 to less than 5,000 migrants annually, coupled with a steady increase in the absolute number of births in the settlements, which reached in the last years more than 10,000 births annually (see graph 2). As a result of these trends, natural growth became the main drive for total population growth in the Israeli settlements of the West Bank- contributing about 75%of the total growth.

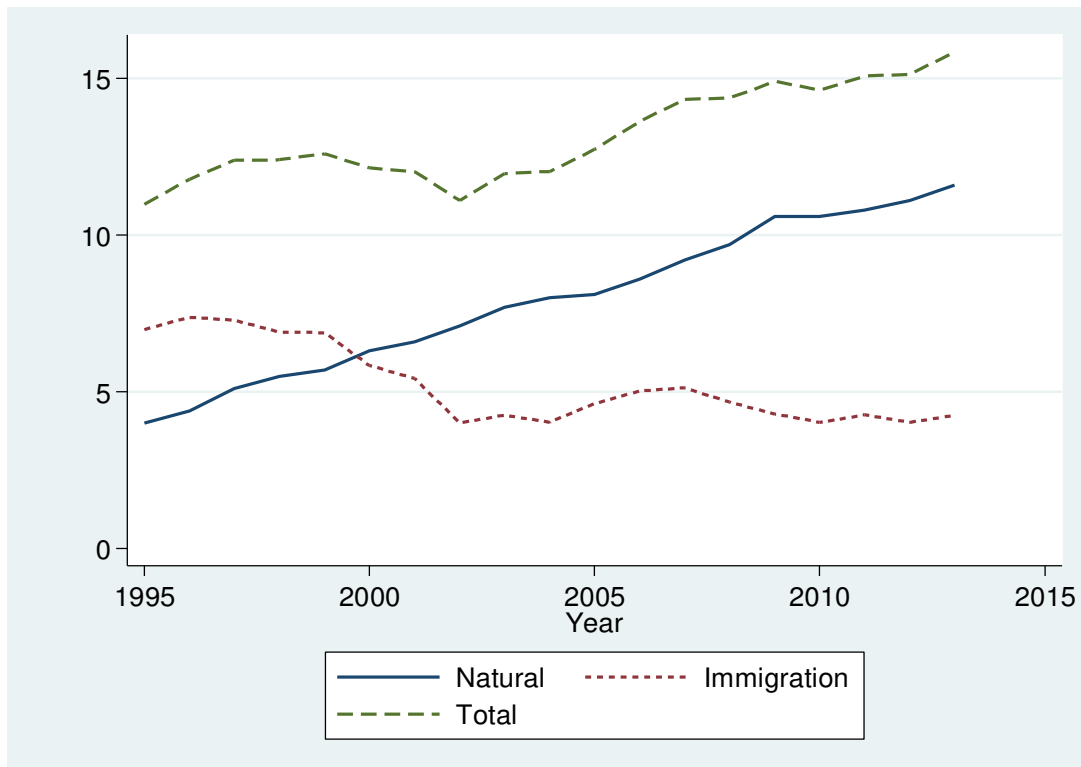
Table 1: Jewish population of Israel, population increase, and average annual growth, 2000-13, in thousands

District	Year				Populating Increase, 2000-2013	Average annual growth
	2000	2005	2010	2013		
Settlements	198.2	247.1	310.7	356.1	157.9	4.51
Jerusalem	542.3	597.8	651.2	689.9	147.6	1.85
North	530.9	563	599	624.1	93.2	1.24
Haifa	643.2	658.1	685	710.3	67.1	0.76
Centre	1342.7	1515.9	1702.9	1814	471.3	2.31
Tel Aviv	1139.5	1173.2	1267.5	1312.4	172.9	1.09
South	783.8	851.9	905	944.4	160.6	1.43

Graph 1: number of settles in the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and total number, 1988-2013, in thousands



Graph 2: Annual number of migrants to and birth in the settlements in the West Bank, 1995-2013, in thousands



Explanations for the settlers' high fertility rates

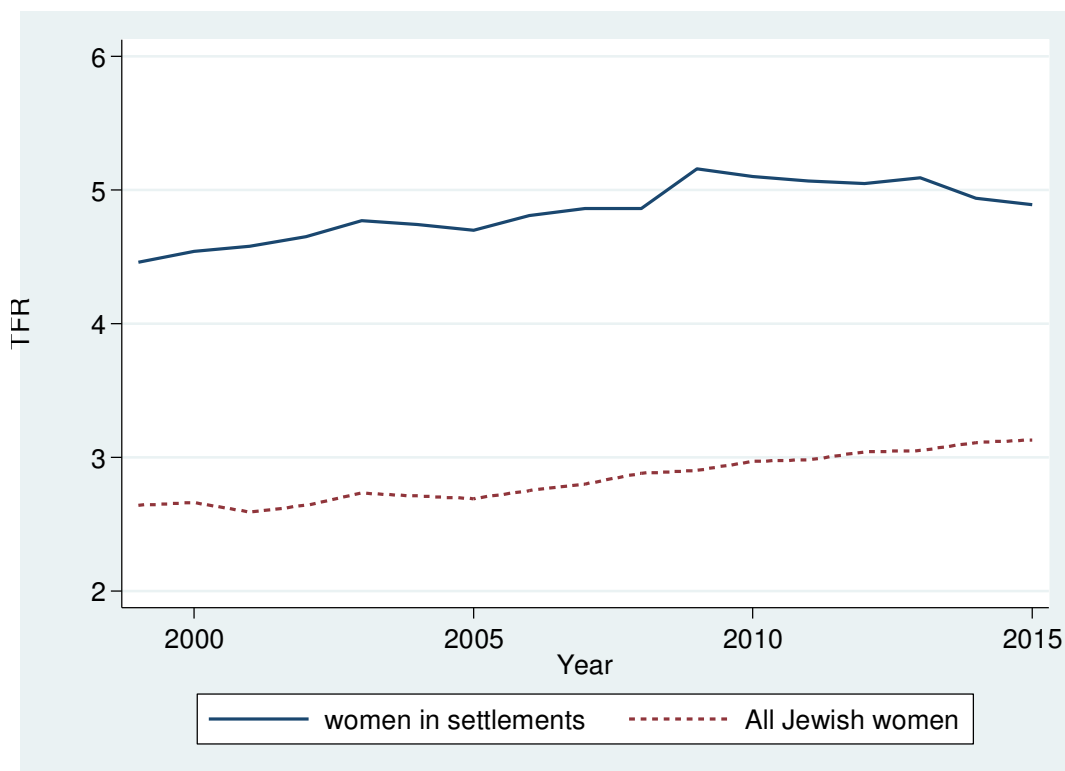
The settler's total fertility rate (TFR) has been increasing during the last two decades and reached close to 5.0 births per woman (see graph 3). This is a high rate compared to the 3.06 TFR among Jewish women in Israel (including women from the settlements). We offer multiple explanations for this trend. First, settlers are a selective population. One mechanism of selection is according to ideological, political orientations. Overall, Israeli left-wing parties calls for ending the settlement project and reaching an agreement with the Palestinians while right-wing parties support intensifying the Jewish settlement in West Bank. The high representation of right-wing, national-religious orientations among the settlers is repeatedly indicated by the results of the national elections. These orientations may explain tendencies for internal migration to the settlement among this sector, yet they (alone) cannot explain the high, rising fertility rates among the settlers community.

A second mechanism of selection applies in the many settlements defined as "communal localities". Candidates wishing to joint these settlements have to go through reception committees that function as a mechanism of selection according to the candidates' personal profiles. This selection enables the reception committees of implementing a pronatalist policy, for example, by favoring candidates with intentions of establishing large families. The relatively high fertility rates in the settlements may thus be contributed partly by this selection mechanism.

Another type of settlements, the ultraorthodox settlements, contributes to the high TFR among the general settler community. In order to keep their unique lifestyle, members of the ultraorthodox community prefer to live in places or neighborhood segregated from the rest of Israeli society, whether in Israel or in the West Bank.

Although small in number, the ultraorthodox settlements include about 30% of the total settlements population. Because of the high fertility rates among the general Ultraorthodox Jewish community, TFRs between 6.0 and 7.0—rates for Ultraorthodox settlements specifically are not available—these settlements are believed to accounts for a reasonable part of the fertility rates of the settler community.

Graph 3: total fertility rate (TFR) among Jewish women the settlements and all Jewish women in Israel, 1999-2015



Three waves of settlement

Understanding trends in the process of settlement relies largely upon the examination of changes in the political map of Israeli society as well as the government's planning and implementation of settlement policies. These policies produced three distinct

waves of settlement. The first wave, started in 1967 immediately after occupying the West Bank and Gaza Strip, was much shaped by security considerations and resulted in establishing settlements along Israel's east border (mainly the Jordan Valley region). These settlements, designed to function as a security zone and followed the same type of the late 19th century Jewish settlement in Palestine, i.e., agricultural cooperatives, failed in attracting enough population, mainly because of their distance from urban centers and the type of employment they provided for the residents².

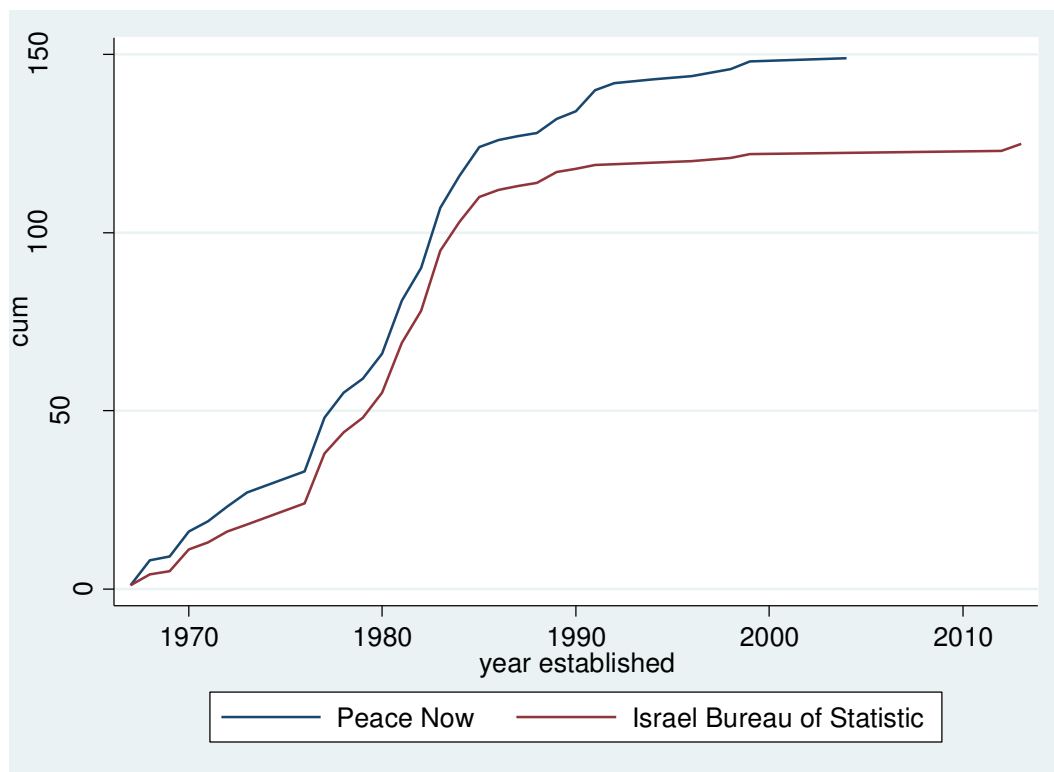
The second wave of settlements was driven by Gush Emunim, a right-wing political movement established in 1976 to encourage Jewish settlement in the WB and Gaza Strip. As a result of the change in Israel's ruling party in 1977—the labor party lost rule to the right-wing Likud party—the pace of starting new settlement has significantly increased (see graph 4). These settlements were designed as small, urban centers (or communal localities). These settlements, too, attracted only limited numbers of families with strong ideological motives willing to live in scattered, small settlements, far away from the large cities.

A third wave – starting in the mid-1980s – was planned with explicit demographic goals: attracting more settlers to the West Bank. This wave coincided with an evolving trend of leaving the crowded, expensive urban centers to suburban areas that characterized many Israeli families at that time. The planners of the third wave of settlement took advantage of this trend through building urban settlement relatively close to main urban centers. These settlements managed to pull many settlers as their

² For example, in 1975, after eight years of settlement, they managed to attract about 425 families. By 1983 only 700 families joined the project leaving many of the houses empty; in the Jordan Valley, where most of these settlement were established, there were 1.7 houses available for each family.

residents could easily commute to central economic and employment centers, especially in Tel-Aviv and Jerusalem.

Graph 4: settlements in the West Banks by year of establishment and source: Israel Bureau of Statistics and Peace Now movement



This quick presentation of the three waves of settlement show that while ideological motives were always present and indeed encouraged part of the Israeli public to move to the settlements, structural factors such as the location of the settlements and the ability of the settlers to easily commute to central employment and economic centers was a key factor in motivating the settlement impulse.

Types of settlements

Another source for learning about the motives of Israelis to settle in the West Bank is the distinction between types of settlements that is provided by the Settlements Monitoring Project (SMP), a project initiated by the Peace Now movement which calls for ending the settlement project. The SMP distinguish between three types of settlements: ideological, welfare, and a mix between the two (a fourth type is the Ultraorthodox settlements) (see table 2). The ideological settlements are characterized by a majority of settlers who are ideologically, strongly committed to the settler enterprise. The welfare settlements, however, are settlement where the majority of residents moved there primarily for economic reasons, a phenomenon usually called “quality-of-life-settlers”. According the data provided by SMP, welfare settlements, 27 out of 136 settlements in 2013, were established mostly in the second and third waves and account for about 31% of the settlements population. This phenomenon indicates the importance of economic opportunities, in addition to ideological motives, in pushing the movement of many of Israelis towards the West Bank settlements³.

The SMP typology highlights the economic motives among many Israelis for moving to the settlements. By comparing the settlements with other Israeli regions in various economic indicators, we provide empirical evidence for the existence of an economic policy that greatly supports the settlement process (and that differs largely from the economic policy implemented inside Israel). Specifically, we examine differences between the settlements and the other regions in indicators related budgets for

³ One can argue that the Ultraorthodox settlement are a kind of “welfare settlements” because they were established to “pay” the Ultraorthodox parties for becoming part of the right-wing coalition, by providing a cheap housing that alleviated the severe housing problem from which this community suffers.

municipalities (or local government), social welfare and services and participation in the labor force. Rates of participation in the labor force and unemployment are used as indicators of the economic status of the population. According to these indicators, compared to the rest of the population of Israel, the settlers enjoy a good status indicated by relatively a high rate of participation in the labor force and a low unemployment rate as well as a relatively high income levels (for employees). That is, they enjoy a status positioned above the national level and close to the statuses of residents of the main, rich economic centers of Israel: the Tel Aviv and Center districts (see table 3).

Table 2: number of settlements and population, by type of settlement and phase, 2011

Type of settlement	Phase				Population in 2011	
	First	Second	Third	All phases	Number	Percent
Ideological	4	52	12	68	90,977	28
Welfare	3	18	6	27	99,635	31
Welfare/ideological	14	18	3	35	38,960	12
Ultra-orthodox	0	5	1	6	95,880	29
Total	21	93	22	136	325,452	100

Another set of indicators compares the government's support of settlements in West Bank with the support received by other municipalities inside Israel: the average municipality income per person, the portion of the municipality budget provided by the government, and the portion from the total municipality budget that comes from

the local taxes collected by the municipality (which is an indicator of burden of taxes on the residents of the locality). We find that the settlements enjoy the highest level of economic support from government, though direct and indirect budgets (results not presented).

In general, our preliminary results shows that while Israeli successive governments claim that after moving to the neoliberal economic model in 1985 their role in regulating the economy, providing social and welfare services, and supporting the local municipalities become less significant compared to role played by the market power, we found that they implement another generous economic policy in the settlements.

Table 3: Economic indicators, by district, Israel, averages 2000-2001

District	Labor force participation	Unemployment	monthly income (NIS)	monthly income (US \$)
Jerusalem	46.8	8.2	6,068	1,597
North	50.9	9.8	5,322	1,401
Haifa	54.3	8.7	6,536	1,720
Center	61.4	7.5	7,617	2,004
Tel-Aviv	59.6	7.1	7,448	1,960
South	53.4	10.1	5,696	1,499
Settlements	46.8	8.2	6,068	1,597