

A Brief History of Jewish Alumni and Representation in Surveys of The US Census Bureau

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Since its establishment in 1902 as a permanent agency, the Census Bureau has proudly hired people that reflected the population that they counted and that includes people of the Jewish faith. The *American Jewish Yearbook* of [1910-1911](#) highlighted several census employees at local and state levels, as well as those at headquarters who worked on the 1910 Decennial Census. Among our [notable alumni](#), several Jewish people played a significant part in the development of statistical methods and other areas of American life:

- [Julius Shiskin](#) (1912-1978): After a career in academia and head economist of the planning division of the War Production, Shiskin joined the Census Bureau in 1945. He first worked as Chief of the Economic Research and Analysis Division and then Assistant Director for Program Planning and Evaluation. He eventually rose to be Chief Economic Statistician and Assistant Director of the Census Bureau. He was instrumental in the development of a computerized method for seasonally adjusting economic time series and was a major force in the development of the business-cycle statistics program. In 1969, Shiskin joined the Office of Management and Budget as Chief Statistician and went on to become Commissioner of the Bureau of Labor Statistics in 1973. The Washington Statistical Society, American Statistical Association, and the National Association of Business Economists sponsor the annual Julius Shiskin Award for Outstanding Achievement in Economic Statistics.
- [Bernard Malamud](#) (1914-1986) A novelist and short-story writer, Malamud won two national Book Awards (for *The Magic Barrel* (1959) and *The Fixer* (1967)) and the 1967 Pulitzer Prize. He also won the 1958 National Jewish Book Award for *The Assistant*. Despite this, he is probably best remembered for his 1952 baseball novel *The Natural*, which was made into an Academy Award nominated movie starring Robert Redford. In the late 1930s he was a clerk in the Census Bureau's Agriculture Division, where he remembered spending his lunchtime "writing short stories at my desk," before leaving for a teaching position in 1940.
- [Shirley Kallek](#) (1928-1983) served as Associate Director for Economic Programs. Kallek made extraordinary contributions to the development of economic statistics at the Census Bureau, especially the 1972 and 1982 Economic and Agricultural Censuses. Kallek pioneered the use of administrative records in census programs and special surveys, and initiated work on the Industrial Directory (now known as the Standard Statistical Establishment List). She received international recognition for her skill in developing timely and cost-effective statistical programs for key economic information. Kallek has been cited by many Census employees as a mentor and she participated in the Census Bureau's [oral history program](#).
- [Murray Feshbach](#) (1929-2019) served as Chief of the USSR Population, Employment, Research, and Development Branch of the Foreign Demographic Analysis Division (now the Center for International Research) of the U.S. Census Bureau from 1957 to 1981. In 1979-1980 he was a Fellow of the Kennan Institute. After his retirement from the U.S. government in 1981, he worked as a research professor at Georgetown University until 2000, when he retired as professor emeritus.

In addition to our alumni, the Census Bureau has also been integral in surveying and providing statistics for Jewish people, both within and outside of the United States. While the Census Bureau has never collected information on any individual's religions, they have collected information on religious bodies such as churches, temples, and mosques, which included information about their buildings, funds, and the size of their congregations. The first questions on religious bodies appeared in the 1850 Census and continued to evolve with each census. Following the creation of a permanent agency in 1902 the Census Bureau began conducting censuses of religious bodies every ten years from 1906 to 1936. This census ended due to funding issues and questions about government's role in religion. Jewish statistician [Harry S. Linfield](#), a special agent for the 1926 and 1936 Censuses of Religious Bodies, noted in his article, "[Statistics of Jews and Jewish Organizations in the United States: An historical Review of Ten Censuses, 1850-1937](#)" that these censuses showed remarkable increases every ten years for Jewish people. This reflected both the refined census techniques and increased reach of surveyors, as well as the influx of immigrant groups that vastly redefined the American population.

Although the United States stopped surveying religious bodies following World War II, it still included that information when available for foreign countries. To help with the rebuilding of Europe and to understand the new Cold War reality, the Census Bureau greatly increased the size its International Statistics Program in the late 1940s. Originally a training and exchange program with other countries, in the early 1950s the ISP began publishing reports on foreign countries as well. In the wake of the mass immigration forced on Jewish people during WWII, the ISP published [Israel: Jewish Population and Immigration](#) in 1952. Jewish population numbers also played an important role in Murray Feshbach's seminal demographic work with the USSR- his reports from the 1980s served as a basepoint for measuring massive demographic shifts following the Soviet dissolution, including within the Jewish diaspora. The legacy of this work lives on with the Census Bureau's Population Clock for the World, which includes countries like [Israel](#), and draws information from the Census Bureau's International Database.

With a renewed appreciation for familial history, and the advent of online genealogical databases, people are appreciating the value of a Census Bureau that has historically counted and reflected all members of the population. In addition to our many Jewish alumni, the Census Bureau can also be proud of having historical resources to help reflect the growth and spread of a vibrant diaspora and group of citizens.