



**REPORT OF THE
COMMUNITY POLICY RESEARCH UNIT**

BOARD OF DEPUTIES OF BRITISH JEWS

COMMUNITY STATISTICS 2005

By DAVID GRAHAM & DANIEL VULKAN

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Introduction

The following report presents the latest set of data on community statistics compiled by the Community Policy Research Unit (CPRU) at the Board of Deputies of British Jews.

These data are collected on behalf of the whole community every year. They are therefore unique in being able to show changes over time. There are no alternative sources of similar data available even accepting the welcome addition of information from the 2001 Census.

Although they are indicative of actual demographic trends, they only represent those Jews who have chosen to associate themselves with the Jewish community through some form of formal act. Consequently, Jews who have not chosen to identify in such a way do not appear here since information about them will not have been picked up by the various Jewish organisations we contact to compile this report. From the point of view of communal planners, data on these formally connected and/or affiliated Jews are of great interest and value.

Notes

1. It should be recognised that these data are collected regardless of institutional denomination. Therefore they include some individuals who would not be recognised as Jewish by all sections of the community.
2. These data are not 'vital statistics' (hence the change in the title of this year's report); neither are they the final word on the total number of Jewish births, marriages, divorces and deaths in Britain. But we are confident they represent the most up-to-date portrayal of Jewish life-cycle events in this country.

Summary of key findings for 2005

Circumcision ('births') — the estimated number of Jewish births has been increasing in recent years, reaching 3,205 in 2005. Part of this increase is due to new methodologies.

Marriages — the number of Jewish marriages has steadily increased over the last four years to 1,000 couples in 2005. Strictly-Orthodox marriages now account for a quarter of all Jewish marriage.

Gittin (divorces) — 249 Jewish couples obtained a *get* in 2005, but this figure is probably less than half the estimated number of Jewish couples divorcing in that year.

Burials/cremations ('deaths') — the number of burials recorded in 2005 was 3,221, which continues the decline noted over the previous decade.

Circumcisions

Introduction

Traditionally, the CPRU has used information on circumcisions as a proxy for Jewish birth cohort data. This is because religion data are not collected by any authority at the time of birth. Needless to say, this method only produces an approximation of the size of the Jewish birth cohort. The data comprise only those Jewish (male) babies whose parents chose to use the services of a *mohel*. They are therefore only representative of the Jewish population who have chosen this means of Jewish identification. Consequently any year on year shifts may reflect changes in Jewish identity as much as the total number of Jewish ‘births’.

Understanding the data

The CPRU collects data from the two bodies representing *mohelim* in the United Kingdom, the ‘Initiation Society’ and the ‘Association of Reform & Liberal Mohelim’. In order to derive the number of female births in the period the total number of circumcisions is factored up using the sex ratio of all births in the national population in the nearest available period. This of course assumes that Jewish birth sex ratios are similar to those in the general population. The final figure produced by this methodology is therefore only an *approximation* of the Jewish birth cohort for the year.

It should also be noted that circumcisions have been included in these data regardless of denomination. However it should be recognised that birth rates differ substantially between strictly-Orthodox Jews and those of other denominations.

Although we have endeavoured to obtain a complete set of data on circumcisions, we are aware that some data are missing. For example, there are some *mohelim* who are not registered with either the Initiation Society or the Association of Reform & Liberal Mohelim, and others who have not submitted complete sets of data to those organisations. Other babies are circumcised by doctors without a religious ceremony, such as in the hospitals in which they were born. These remain unrecorded.

Data Summary

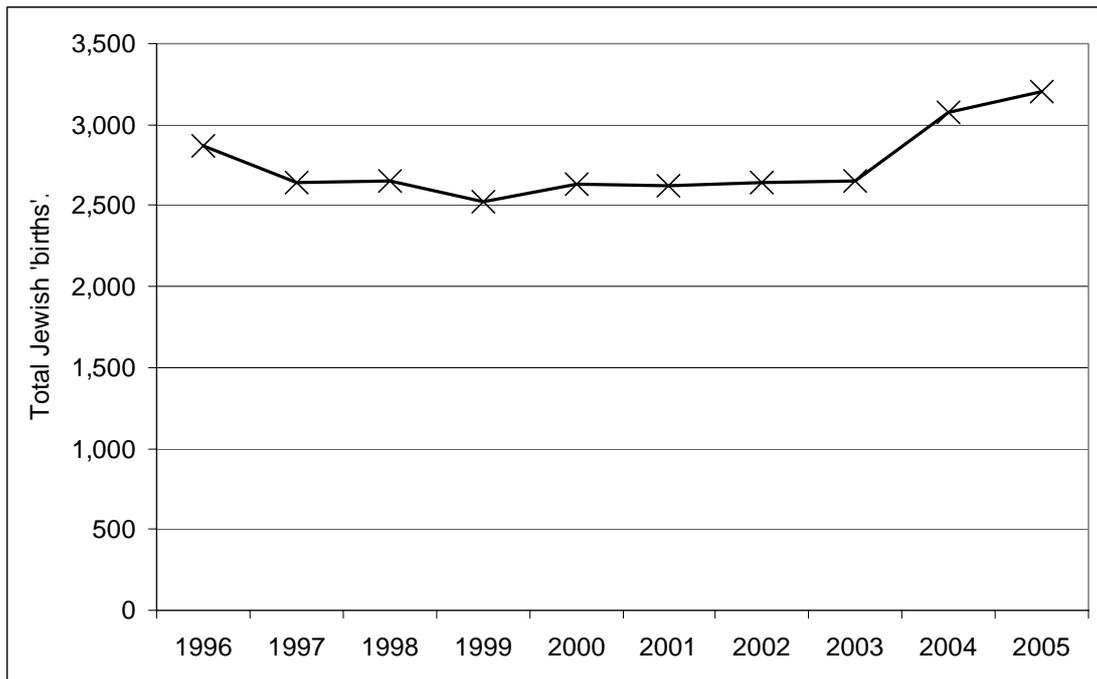
The data show that the number of reported circumcisions has been increasing for most of the past decade. Between 2001 and 2005 the number of circumcisions recorded increased by 22 per cent. This rise has two separate explanations. First, anecdotal evidence regarding *shalom zochor* celebrations in the strictly-Orthodox group as well as data from the 2001 Census suggest rising birth rates within this section of the community. Second, non-ritual circumcisions have been included in 2005 and 2004 whereas this has not been the case in earlier years.

Table 1: Total circumcision and inferred Jewish births 1995 to 2005

Year	Circumcisions collated by the CPRU	Multiplier*	Inferred total Jewish 'births'	3-yr Average
1996	1,475	1.948	2,873	2,837
1997	1,356	1.951	2,646	2,725
1998	1,361	1.951	2,656	2,609
1999	1,296	1.948	2,524	2,604
2000	1,348	1.952	2,632	2,593
2001	1,344	1.952	2,623	2,633
2002	1,357	1.948	2,643	2,638
2003	1,357	1.952	2,648	2,789
2004	1,579	1.948	3,076	2,976
2005	1,640	1.954	3,205	-

* The multiplier is the ratio of all births to male births in the general population for that year published by the Office for National Statistics.

Graph 1: Total Jewish 'Births' 1996 to 2005



Marriages

Introduction

The religion of each spouse is not recorded in official statistics. Therefore the CPRU collects data on the number of marriage ceremonies carried out under Jewish auspices during the year.

Until 2005 we were not able to distinguish first marriages from remarriages, despite the fact that second and higher order marriages are increasingly common.

Understanding the data

Although these data are not adjusted (unlike the circumcision data) it should be stressed that they only reflect trends in the formally affiliated Jewish population. Couples marrying outside formal Jewish auspices are not included, even if both partners are Jewish.

In addition, data on marriages in which only one partner professes to be currently Jewish (which under civil law cannot take place under Jewish auspices) are not included. This is despite the growing size of this group.

Data summary

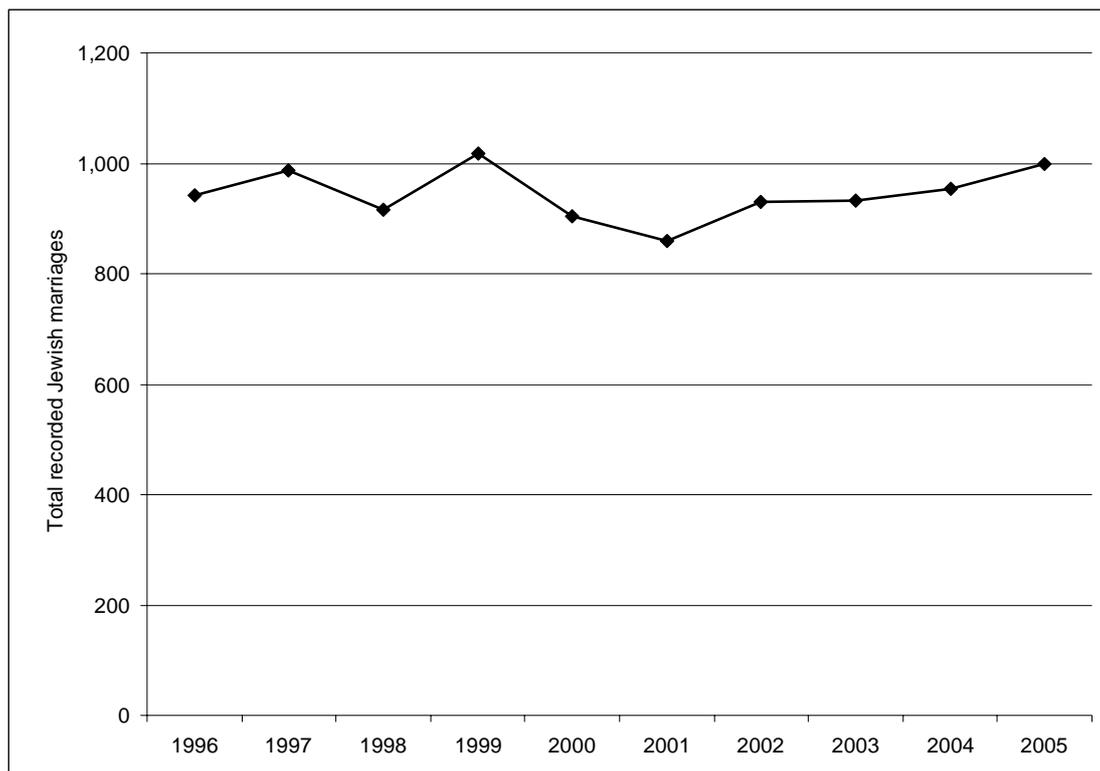
The downward trend in Jewish marriages that occurred in the five years to 2001 has evidently continued its reverse, with every year since then showing an increase in total marriages. However the peak reached in 1999 of 1,017 has not yet been achieved.

Table 2: Total marriages, by denomination, 1996 to 2005

Year	Strictly-Orthodox	*Central Orthodox	Sephardi	Masorti	Reform	Liberal	Total
1996	195	539	49	21	104	33	941
1997	186	561	43	20	128	48	986
1998	195	496	44	19	111	52	917
1999	215	543	39	28	144	48	1,017
2000	197	490	40	24	101	52	904
2001	176	481	27	22	113	40	859
2002	217	469	59	25	107	53	930
2003	238	472	43	36	98	45	932
2004	241	472	43	29	131	39	955
2005	275	446	39	30	162	48	1,000

*including the United Synagogue, Federation of Synagogues, and other Synagogues recognising the authority of the Chief Rabbi.

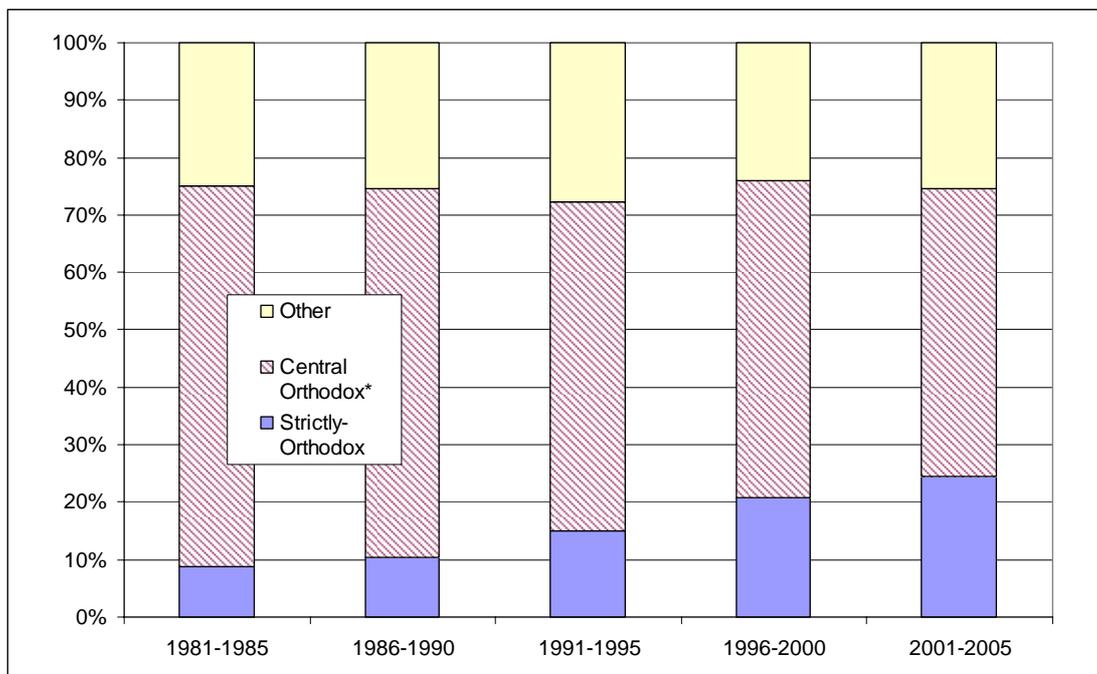
Graph 2: Total marriages 1996 to 2005



Jewish marriages by denomination

The graph below summarises the relative proportions of marriages by denomination over the 25 year period 1981 to 2005. In the early 1980s two-thirds (66%) of all recorded Jewish marriages were central-Orthodox; in the most recent period 50% were. This is due to the steady growth in the numbers of strictly-Orthodox marriages (which represented less than 10% of all marriages in the early 1980s but today are over a quarter) and the absolute decline in central-Orthodox marriages. There were nearly three times more strictly-Orthodox marriages in 2005 than in 1981 but nearly half as many central-Orthodox marriages in 2005 as compared with 1981.

Graph 3: Marriages by denomination, average for 5-year cohort, for the period 1981 to 2005



* including the United Synagogue, Federation of Synagogues, and other Synagogues recognising the authority of the Chief Rabbi.

A note on remarriage

In 2005 the CPRU was able to obtain for the first time data on the marital status of the individuals getting married for 934 of the 1,000 marriages recorded in that year. Of these, most (83%) were first marriages for both parties; in 10% one of the parties was remarrying following a divorce; in 5% both parties were remarrying following a divorce; and in the remaining 2% one or other party had been widowed (and neither

had been divorced). Therefore we estimate that in 170 marriages (17%), at least one partner was remarrying.

Divorces (*Gittin*)

Introduction

There are no official statistics on the religion of divorcing couples; therefore the CPRU collects data on *gittin*—religiously sanctioned divorces. This means that these ‘divorce’ data are missing large numbers of Jewish couples who have chosen to obtain a divorce outside formal Jewish channels. These data therefore only show ‘affiliated’ Jewish divorce data, i.e. they only report on couples whose divorce has been ratified by a *beth din* (Jewish religious court).

Data summary

The data show that the number of *gittin* have remained static at an average of 260 per year over the 10-year period.

Table 3: Total *gittin*, 1996 to 2005

Year	Gittin
1996	272
1997	233
1998	233
1999	267
2000	270
2001	270
2002	258
2003	289
2004	274
2005	249

How many Jewish couples divorce without obtaining a *get*?

It is possible to get an idea of the actual number of Jewish couples who divorced in 2005 by inferring from data that are known about the general population. Data from the Office for National Statistics reveal that over the period from 2001 to 2003, for every 100 marriages taking place annually in England & Wales, there were 57 decrees absolute granted. Assuming that the rate of divorce amongst the Jewish population is similar, then relative to the 1,000 Jewish marriages recorded in 2005 we might expect that there were actually 570 divorces and not 249 in that year.

Burials and Cremations

Introduction

There are no official statistics recording a person's religion at the time of their death; therefore the CPRU collects data on Jewish burials and cremations on behalf of the community. Again it must be borne in mind what these figures do and do not show. They are not total Jewish deaths over the period but rather show total deaths among the Jewishly identifying population i.e. those who have chosen (or whose families have chosen) to be buried or cremated under Jewish auspices. Consequently a decline or rise in the figures is as much a reflection of changes in affiliation and Jewish identity as it is in the numbers of people who have passed away.

Data summary

The total number of recorded deaths has been declining steadily over the past decade. A total of 946 fewer deaths were recorded in 2005 compared with 1996—a decline of 23 per cent. Bearing in mind that the age structure of the Jewish population is old, this gradual decline is perhaps counterintuitive since we would expect deaths to increase annually. Possible reasons for the decline include:

1. an absolute contraction in the total size of the population
2. a decline in the number of people born or brought up Jewish, choosing to be buried/cremated under Jewish auspices
3. an 'echo' due to the passing away of the majority of the baby-boom population born shortly after WWI

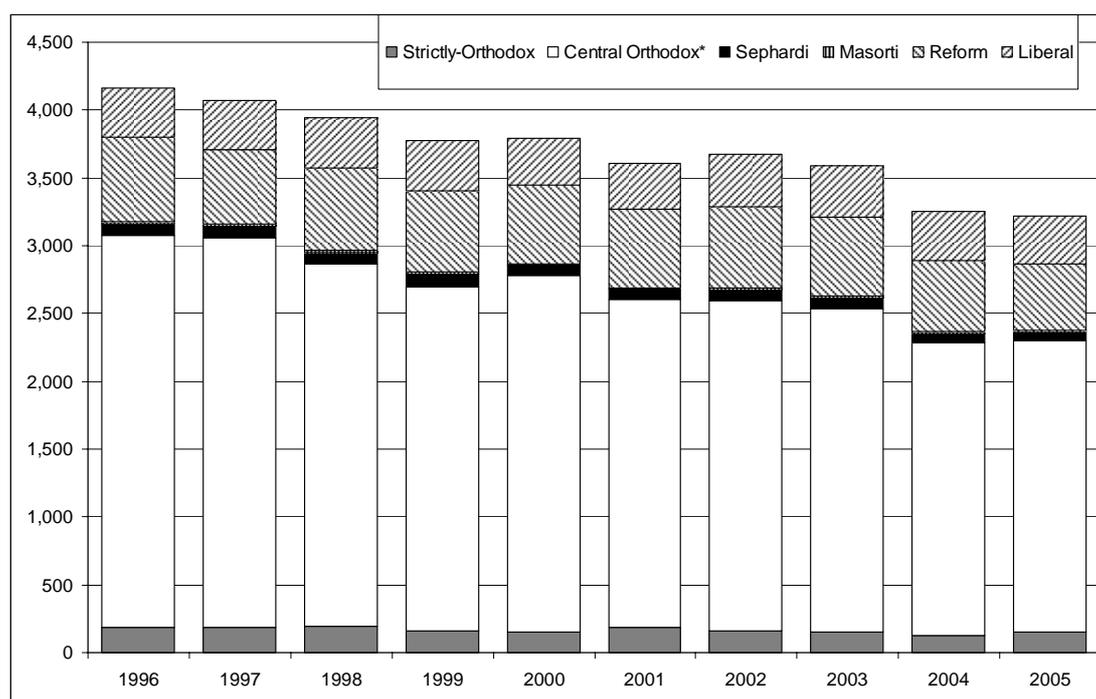
Table 4 – Total recorded deaths, by denomination*, 1996 to 2005

Year	Strictly Orthodox	**Central Orthodox	Sephardi	Masorti	Reform	Liberal	Total
1996	189	2,886	89	16	618	369	4,167
1997	186	2,874	83	14	551	363	4,071
1998	191	2,678	81	16	605	377	3,948
1999	160	2,535	94	14	598	371	3,772
2000	149	2,629	78	10	581	344	3,791
2001	184	2,419	74	14	577	342	3,610
2002	161	2,435	78	12	601	385	3,672
2003	149	2,391	74	15	581	382	3,592
2004	130	2,151	71	12	528	365	3,257
2005	149	2,148	69	13	490	352	3,221

* Denominational breakdowns may not exactly match previous reports due to a change in the methodology.

** including the United Synagogue, Federation of Synagogues, and other Synagogues recognising the authority of the Chief Rabbi.

Graph 4 – Total recorded deaths, by denomination*, 1996 to 2005



* including the United Synagogue, Federation of Synagogues, and other Synagogues recognising the authority of the Chief Rabbi.