



**REPORT OF THE
COMMUNITY POLICY RESEARCH GROUP**

BOARD OF DEPUTIES OF BRITISH JEWS

**BRITAIN'S JEWISH
COMMUNITY STATISTICS 2006**

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Issued December 2007

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Summary of key findings for 2006

Circumcisions ('births') — Provisional data show that the rise in imputed births recorded in 2004 and 2005 levelled off in 2006 to 3,314, however the trend over the last decade continues to be upwards.

Marriages — The rise in marriages over the 2001 to 2005 period has ceased. The figure for 2006 is 894, a decline of 11% on the previous year's total. The trend over the last decade is flat.

Gittin (divorces) — 248 couples obtained a *get* in 2006, however this figure is likely to be less than half the true number of divorcing couples that married under Jewish auspices.

Burials/cremations ('mortality') — 3,107 burials/cremations were recorded in 2006, a decline of 4% on the 2005 figure. During the past decade the number of recorded Jewish deaths has declined by almost 25%.

Introduction

The following report presents data on community statistics for Britain's Jewish population compiled by the Community Policy Research Group (CPRG) at the Board of Deputies of British Jews.

These data are collected on behalf of the whole community. It is the only survey to do this on an annual basis and therefore the data are unique in being able to show changes over time. From the point of view of community planners the data represent the most up-to-date portrayal of the Jewish community in Britain.

Although they are indicative of actual demographic trends, they only represent those Jews who have chosen, or whose families have chosen, to associate themselves with the Jewish community through a formal Jewish act, i.e. circumcision,¹ marriage in a synagogue, dissolution of marriage by a *Beth Din*, Jewish burial or cremation. Consequently, Jews who have not chosen to identify in these ways do not appear in this report.

Further, it should be recognised that these data are collected regardless of institutional denomination. They therefore include some individuals who would not be recognised as Jewish by all sections of the community.

¹ Jewish female births are therefore imputed.

Circumcisions – ‘births’

Introduction

Religion data are not collected by any authority at the time of birth, therefore the CPRG uses data on circumcisions as a proxy for calculating the size of the Jewish birth cohort.² The data comprise only those Jewish (male) babies whose parents chose to use the services of a *mohel* whether or not that *mohel* was a member of a professional association. They are therefore only representative of the Jewish population who have chosen this form of Jewish identification.

Understanding the data

In order to derive the number of female births in 2006 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 the Jewish sex ratio at birth is similar to that of the general population. The final figure produced by this methodology is therefore only an *approximation* of the (affiliated) Jewish birth cohort for the year.

The CPRG collects data from the two bodies representing *mohelim* in the United Kingdom, the ‘Initiation Society’ and the ‘Association of Reform & Liberal Mohalim’. It also endeavours to obtain data from a number of *mohelim* who operate independently; we are aware however that some data are missing. The data do not distinguish between denominations; however it should be recognised that birth rates tend to be higher among more orthodox Jews than less orthodox Jews.

Missing data

In 2006 it was not possible to obtain data from three *mohelim* who were registered with the Initiation Society during that year. Based on previous year’s estimates for which we have data the number of circumcisions carried out by these *mohelim* was 176; this figure is used in Table 1 and therefore **the data in that table are provisional** and subject to change. In addition we were unable to obtain data from a further fifteen *mohelim* who are not registered with either of the professional associations, but who are listed in either the *Luach* of the Union of Orthodox Hebrew

² The use of *shalom zachor* data is discussed on page 8.

Congregations or the Yearbook of the Jewish Representative Council of Greater Manchester and Region. It is not known how many *britot* have been carried out by these *mohelim*.

In addition, some babies (that would normally be considered Jewish by one or both of the organisations mentioned) are circumcised by doctors without a religious ceremony, such as in the hospitals in which they were born. These remain unrecorded as do any other circumcisions carried out by active *mohelim* of whom we are unaware.

Data summary

The data show that the number of reported circumcisions has been increasing for most of the past decade. It should be noted that figures in Table 1 include revised data recently obtained from the Association of Reform and Liberal Mohalim and are therefore updates to previously published figures, particularly in respect of ‘non-ritual’ circumcisions. Over the decade to 2006 the number of circumcisions recorded provisionally increased by 21%.

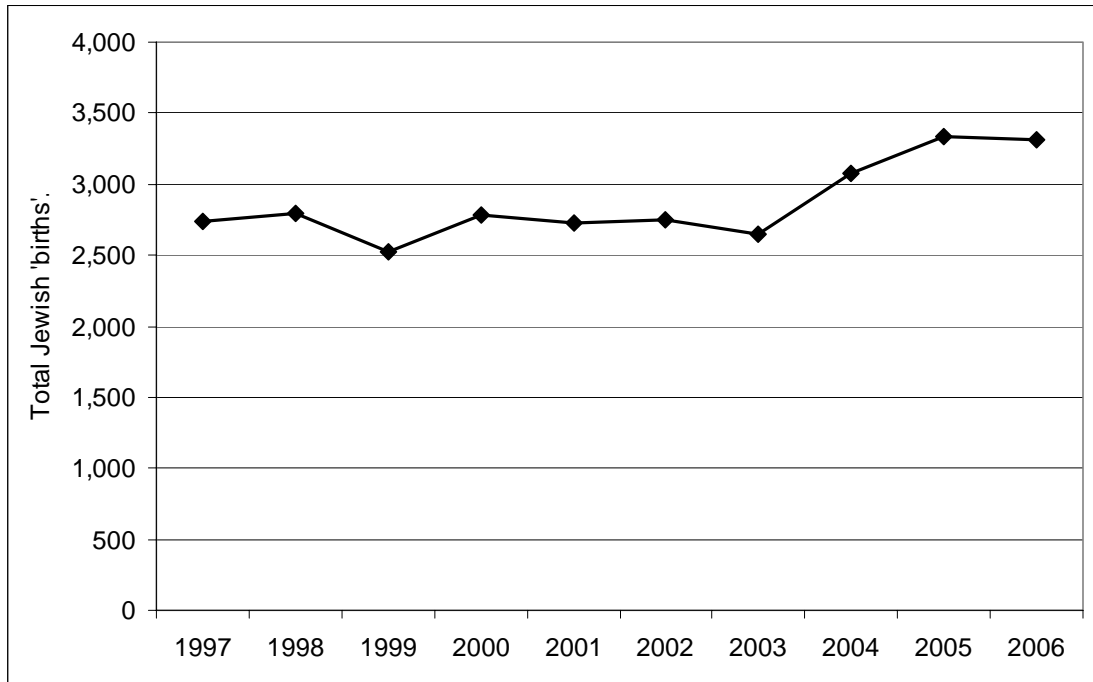
Table 1: Total circumcisions and inferred Jewish births, 1997 to 2006 (Provisional)

Year	Circumcisions collated by the CPRG	Multiplier*	Inferred total Jewish ‘births’	3-yr Average
1997**	1,405	1.951	2,742	2,857
1998**	1,432	1.951	2,794	2,687
1999	1,296	1.948	2,524	2,701
2000**	1,427	1.952	2,786	2,680
2001**	1,398	1.952	2,729	2,754
2002**	1,411	1.948	2,748	2,708
2003	1,357	1.952	2,648	2,824
2004	1,579	1.948	3,076	3,021
2005**	1,709	1.954	3,339	3,243
2006	1,695	1.955	3,314	-

* 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 taken from the ONS’s FMI Series.

** Figures for these years have been revised based on new information obtained from the Association of Reform and Liberal Mohalim. They therefore differ from previously published figures. This is partly because they now include non-ritual circumcisions (such babies would ordinarily be considered Jewish by the Association, however the parents chose not to have a ritual ceremony). In previous years these babies were not included in the data. In addition they also include figures from a number of *mohelim* from whom we had not been able to obtain data at the time of publication.

Graph 1: Total Jewish 'births' 1997 to 2006



Strictly-Orthodox births and circumcisions

It is customary amongst Ashkenazi Jews (particularly the more orthodox) to hold a celebratory gathering, known as a *shalom zachar*, on the first Friday night after the birth of a male child. Within the strictly-Orthodox community in the Stamford Hill area of North London, notices of these are published in the weekly *Kol Mevasser* announcement sheet.

It is important to recognise that the exact locational and identity boundaries for this data source are unclear. It is assumed that the placing of announcements in *Kol Mevasser* is almost universal within the Ashkenazi community of Stamford Hill, however this does not include the Lubavitch community. In addition the data do not include *shalom zachar* ceremonies carried out in North-west London (in particular Golders Green and Edgware) or in Gateshead.

The CPRG has collected data for the 52 weeks from December 2006 until November 2007 (i.e. **not** the 2006 period). By applying the sex ratio used above, they show that there were approximately 750 strictly-Orthodox imputed births in Stamford Hill in the period. In addition, similar data show that there were 305 imputed births in Manchester³ in 2006.

Note it is not possible to directly compare these data (1,055 ‘births’) with the total (3,314 ‘births’) shown in Table 1 since there is no way of telling what proportion of the former are contained within the latter, although many, but not necessarily all, will be.

³ We are grateful to Martin Stern of Salford for the provision of these data.

Jewish Marriages

Introduction

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

Understanding the data

Although these data are not imputed (unlike the circumcision data) it should be stressed that they only reflect trends in the formally affiliated Jewish population. Jews 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.

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

Data summary

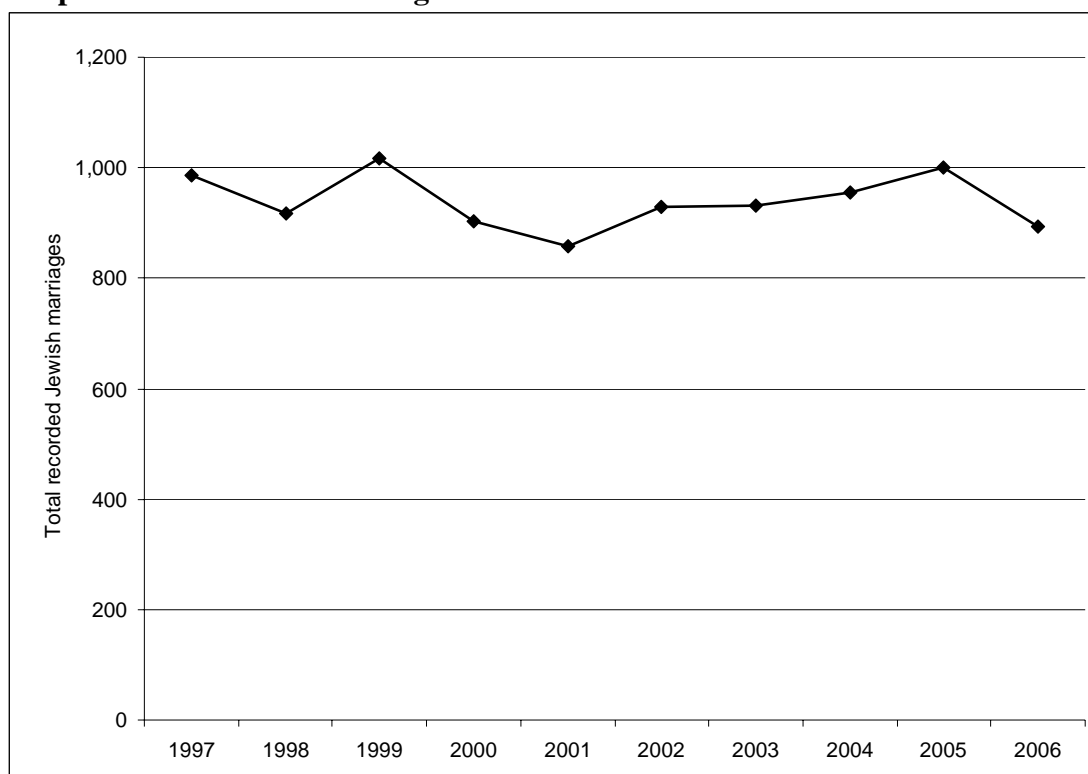
Although there has been a decline in marriages of 11% since 2005 the overall picture for the decade appears to be rather flat. The rise observed between 2001 and 2005 which looked to be heading towards the peak recorded in 1999 of 1,017 marriages, appears to have ceased in 2006.

Table 2: Total marriages by denomination, 1997 to 2006

Year	Strictly-Orthodox	*Central Orthodox	Sephardi	Masorti	Reform	Liberal	Total
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
2006	231	460	33	43	94	33	894

* This includes the United Synagogue, Federation of Synagogues, and other synagogues recognising the authority of the Chief Rabbi.

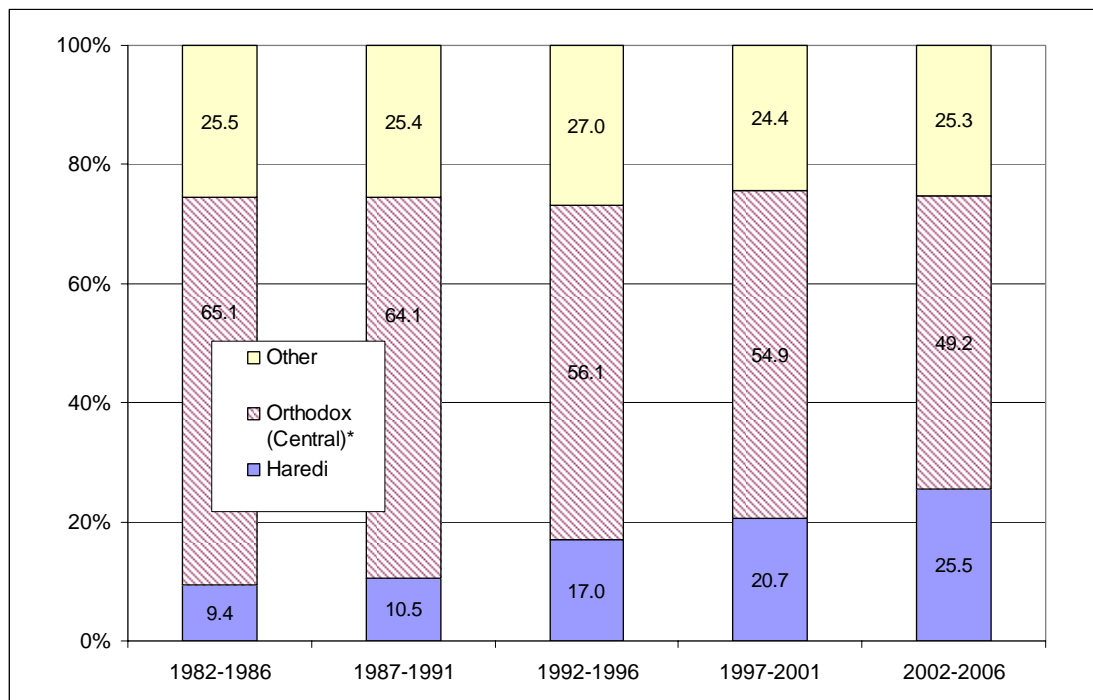
Graph 2: Total Jewish marriages 1997 to 2006



Jewish marriages by denomination

The graph below summarises the relative proportions of marriages by denomination over the 25 year period 1982 to 2006. In the first period (1982-1986) two-thirds (65%) of all recorded Jewish marriages were central-Orthodox; in the most recent period (2002-2006) 49% 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 26%) and an absolute decline in central-Orthodox marriages.

Graph 3: Marriages by denomination, average for 5-year cohort, for the period 1982 to 2006



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

Remarriage

As in 2005 the CPRG has obtained data on the marital status of the individuals getting married for 696 of the 894 marriages recorded in 2006. Of these, most (79%) were first marriages for both parties (compared with 83% in 2005); in 10% one of the parties was remarrying following a divorce (this was also 10% in 2005); in 9% both parties were remarrying following a divorce (compared with 5% in 2005); and in the remaining 2% one or other party had been widowed (and neither had been divorced). Therefore we estimate that in 188 marriages in 2006 (21%), at least one partner was remarrying.

Age at marriage

For the first time in 2006, the CPRG has been able to collect data on age at marriage for 643 of the 663 marriages *not* taking place amongst the strictly-Orthodox community. These show average ages at marriage of 34 years for men and 32 years for women. For first marriages (for both partners) only, the average ages are 31 years and 29 years respectively.

Among the population of England and Wales as a whole, for marriages taking place in 2004 (the most recent year for which data are available), the average ages were 36 for men and 33 for women; for first marriages, the average ages were 31 and 28 respectively.⁴

⁴ ONS FM2 Series #32 – 2005, Tables 3.16 and 3.17

Divorces (*Gittin*)

Introduction

There are no official statistics on the religion of divorcing couples; therefore the CPRG collects data on *gittin*—religiously sanctioned divorces. Since many couples who married under Jewish auspices divorce through the civil courts only, these data are missing large numbers of divorces. They therefore only show religious Jewish divorces, 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 continued to remain static at an average of 259 per year over the 10-year period.

Table 3: Total *gittin*, 1997 to 2006

Year	Gittin
1997	233
1998	233
1999	267
2000	270
2001	270
2002	258
2003	289
2004	274
2005	251*
2006	248

* Figure revised from 2005 report

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

In the general population the divorce rate has been declining since the mid 1980s.⁵ It is possible to get an idea of the total number of Jewish couples who divorced in 2006 by inferring from data that are known about the general population. Data from the Office for National Statistics reveal that over the period from 2002 to 2004, 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 (which may not be the case), then relative to the 894 Jewish marriages recorded in 2006 we might expect that there were actually 510 divorces and not 248 in that year.

⁵ See <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nugget.asp?id=170>

Burials and Cremations - mortality

Introduction

There are no official statistics recording a person's religion at the time of their death; therefore the CPRG 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 the total number of 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 for them) to be buried or cremated under Jewish auspices. Consequently a decline or a 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 Jewish deaths in 2006 was 3,107 which represents a continuation of the decline recorded in recent years. Over the past decade the total number has declined by 964 deaths—a decline of 24%. Bearing in mind that the age structure of the Jewish population is getting older overall, 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 most at risk of death;
2. a decline in the number of people born or brought up Jewish, choosing to be buried or cremated under Jewish auspices;
3. an 'echo' effect due to the passing away of the majority of the baby-boom population born shortly after WWI.

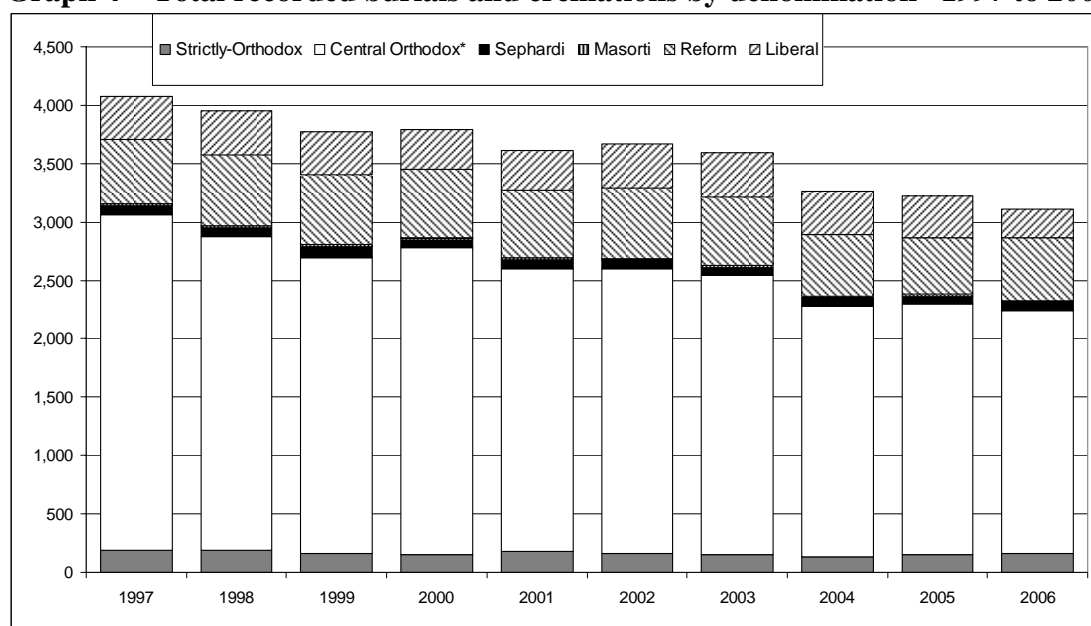
Table 4 – Total recorded burials and cremations by denomination* 1997 to 2006

Year	Strictly Orthodox	**Central Orthodox	Sephardi	Masorti	Reform	Liberal	Total
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
2006	157	2,088	68	12	541	241	3,107

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

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

Graph 4 – Total recorded burials and cremations by denomination* 1997 to 2006



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

Cremation

Whilst cremation is not permitted within orthodox Judaism, both the Reform and Liberal movements in the UK do allow it. We have data for 768 of the 782 funerals carried out in 2006 under Reform or Liberal auspices; these reveal that there were 312 cremations, amounting to 40% of the total. By comparison, around 72% of all deaths in the UK in 2006 were followed by cremation.