



**REPORT OF THE
COMMUNITY RESEARCH UNIT**

BOARD OF DEPUTIES OF BRITISH JEWS

**BRITAIN'S JEWISH
COMMUNITY STATISTICS 2007**

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Issued November 2008

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Summary of Key Findings for 2007

Marriages — The number of marriages in 2007 was 911, a slight increase on the previous year's total, but still 9% below the number achieved in 2005. The trend over the last decade continues to be flat.

***Gittin* (divorces)** — 229 couples obtained a *get* in 2007, the lowest figure in almost twenty years, however this figure is likely to be smaller than the true number of divorcing couples that married under Jewish auspices.

Burials/cremations (deaths) — 2,948 burials/cremations were recorded in 2007, a decline of 5% on the 2006 figure. During the past decade the number of recorded Jewish deaths has declined by around 25%.

NB: Circumcisions (Births) — At the time of publication, data relating to circumcisions in 2007 were not yet available. The figures in this report for births therefore relate to 2006 (see pages 5-7).

Introduction

The following report presents data on community statistics for Britain's Jewish population compiled by the Community Research Unit (CRU) 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, marriage in a synagogue, dissolution of marriage by a *Beth Din*, or 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.

Circumcisions (Births) (2006)

At the time of publication, data relating to circumcisions carried out in 2007 were not available.¹ The figures below therefore relate to 2006, the most recent year for which the CRU does have data.

Introduction

Religion data are not collected by any authority at the time of birth, therefore the CRU uses data on circumcisions as a proxy for calculating the size of the Jewish birth cohort.² The data comprise 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 Jewish birth cohort for the year.

The data do not distinguish between denominations, however it should be recognised that birth rates are known to be higher among more orthodox Jews than less orthodox Jews.

The CRU 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.

¹ Circumcision data for 2007 are not expected to be available until 2009. With the exception of data for strictly Orthodox circumcisions this section is more or less unchanged since the report 'Britain's Jewish Community Statistics 2006'.

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

Missing data

We are aware however that some data are missing. 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 years' estimates for which we have data, the number of circumcisions carried out by these *mohelim* was 176; this figure is used in Table 1. In addition we were unable to obtain data from a further fifteen *mohelim* who were not registered with either of the professional associations, but who were listed in either the *Luach* of the Union of Orthodox Hebrew 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 Initiation Society or the Association of Reform & Liberal Mohalim) 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 the CRU is unaware.

Data summary

The data show that the number of reported circumcisions has been increasing for most of the past decade. Over the decade to 2006 the number of circumcisions recorded provisionally increased by 21%.

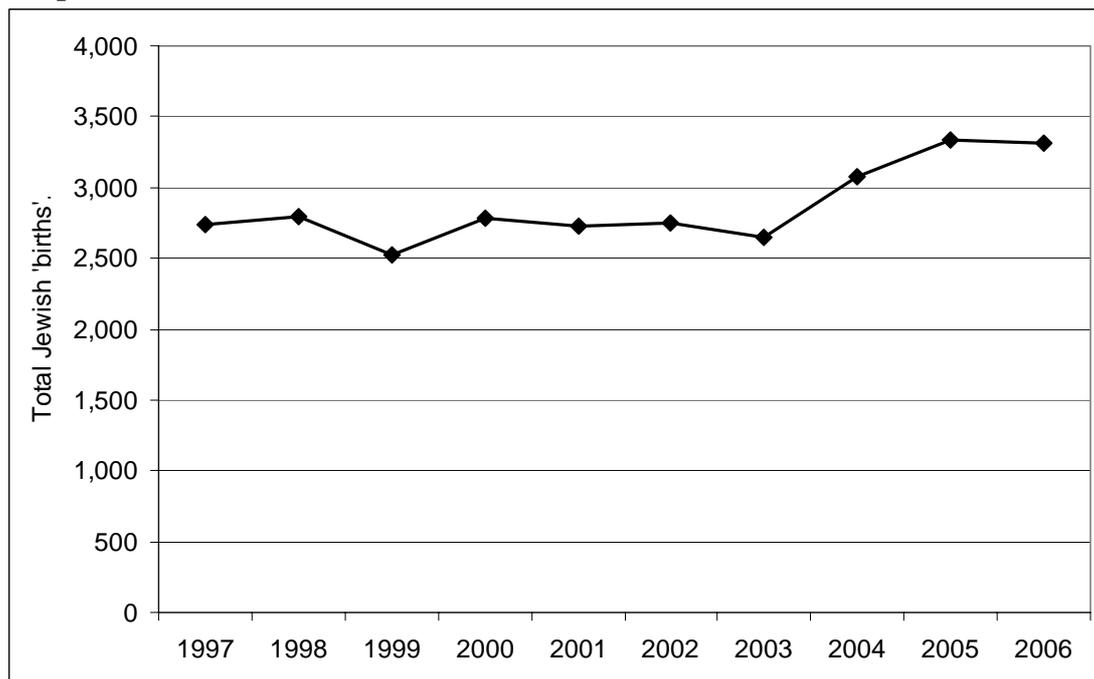
Table 1: Total circumcisions and inferred Jewish births, 1997 to 2006[§]

Year	Circumcisions collated by the CRU	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	-

[§] Data for 2007 were **not** available at the time of publication of this report.

* 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 FM1 Series.

Graph 1: Total Jewish 'births' 1997 to 2006*



* Data for 2007 were **not** available at the time of publication of this report.

Strictly Orthodox Births and Circumcisions 2007

It is customary among 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. The strictly Orthodox community of Stamford Hill, London, publishes these as notices in the weekly *Kol Mevasser* announcement sheet. The notices can therefore be used to estimate the number of births in Stamford Hill.

For various reasons (such as birth timings or religious holidays) not all male births are recorded as *shalom zachars*, however residual births are published in a separate section of *Kol Mevasser*.

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.

The CRU has been collecting data from *Kol Mevasser* since December 2006, and a total of 376 male births were reported in 2007. By applying the sex ratio used in Table 1, we obtain an estimate of 735 strictly Orthodox births in Stamford Hill in 2007. In addition, similar data for Manchester³ show that there were 305 imputed births in 2006, and 321 in 2007. We estimate that a further 250-350 babies are born each year in the strictly Orthodox communities of North-west London and Gateshead.⁴ Therefore an estimated total of 1,300-1,400 strictly Orthodox births occurred in 2007.

Note that, even were they to relate to the same year, it would not be possible to directly compare these data (up to 1,400 ‘births’ in 2007) with the total (3,314 ‘births’ in 2006) shown in Table 1 since there is no way of telling what proportion of the former would be contained within the latter, although many, but not necessarily all, would be.

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

⁴ Based on the CRU report Population trends among Britain’s Strictly Orthodox Jews, 2008.

Jewish Marriages

Introduction

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

Understanding the data

The way in which marriages are recorded in England and Wales is complex and affects the likelihood of us picking up the data. Where the civil ceremony and the religious ceremony take place *at the same time*, all data are recorded. However, sometimes the civil registration may occur days or even weeks prior to the Jewish ceremony and in a number of these cases we are unable to verify the figures. In some cases only a religious ceremony is carried out and again this makes data collection difficult. It is also possible that no religious ceremony occurs at all and these are entirely missed but probably account for very few instances of Jews marrying other Jews.

In the case of mixed-faith marriages data are also missing. This is because such marriages cannot legally take place under Jewish auspices, despite the significant size of this group. Further, same-sex unions (known as civil partnerships) are also not recorded here whether or not both partners are Jewish.

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

Data summary

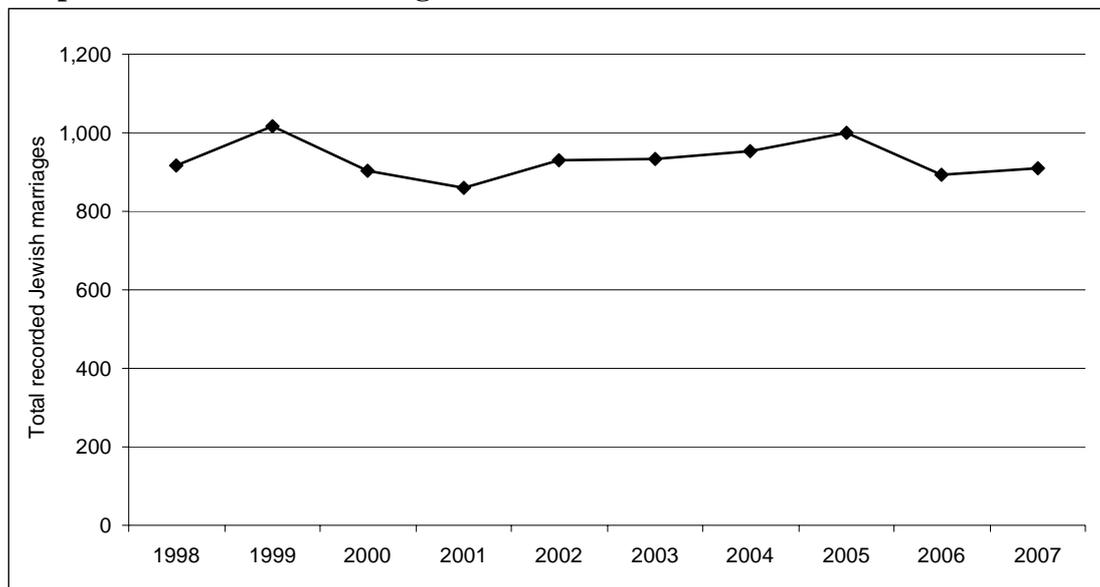
Although there has been a slight increase in marriages since 2006, the overall picture for the decade to 2007 is flat.

Table 2: Total marriages by denomination, 1998 to 2007

Year	Strictly-Orthodox	*Central Orthodox	Sephardi	Masorti	Reform	Liberal	Total
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
2007	243	464	43	33	97	31	911

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

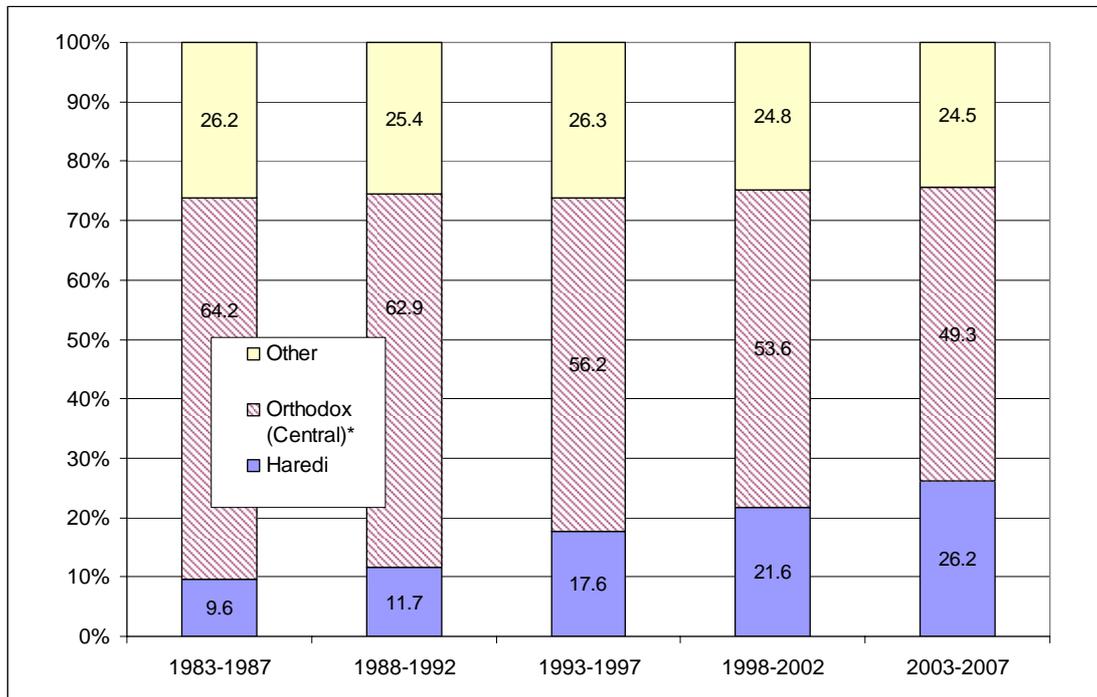
Graph 2: Total Jewish marriages 1998 to 2007



Jewish marriages by denomination

The graph below summarises the relative proportions of marriages by denomination over the 25 year period 1983 to 2007. In the first period (1983-1987) two-thirds (64%) of all recorded Jewish marriages were central Orthodox; in the most recent period (2003-2007) 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 in 2007 are 27%) and an absolute decline in central Orthodox marriages.

Graph 3: Marriages by denomination, average for 5-year cohort, for the period 1983 to 2007



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

Remarriage

Since 2005 the CRU has obtained data on the marital status of the individuals getting married, covering 633 of the 911 marriages recorded in 2007. Of these, most (82%) were first marriages for both parties (compared with 79% in 2006 and 83% in 2005); in 10% one of the parties was remarrying following a divorce (this was also 10% in 2006 and 2005); in 6% both parties were remarrying following a divorce (compared with 9% in 2006 and 5% in 2005); in the remaining 2% one or other party had been widowed (and neither had been divorced).

Age at marriage

The CRU has been able to collect data on age at marriage for 629 of the 668 marriages *not* taking place among the strictly Orthodox community. These show average ages at marriage of 34 years for men and 32 years for women. For weddings in which both partners are marrying for the first time, the average ages are 30 years and 28 years respectively. It is likely that the average age at first marriage for strictly Orthodox Jews is considerably younger, possibly around 19 or 20 for both females and males, however data are not currently available to confirm this.

Among the population of England and Wales as a whole, for marriages taking place in 2005 (the most recent year for which data are available), the average ages were 36 for men and 34 for women; for first marriages, the average ages were 31 and 29 respectively.⁵

⁵ ONS FM2 Series #33 – 2006, Tables 3.16 and 3.17.

Gittin (Divorces)

Introduction

There are no official statistics on the religion of divorcing couples, therefore the CRU 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 Jewish divorces. They therefore only show religious divorces, i.e. they only report on couples whose divorce has been ratified by a *beth din* (Jewish religious court).

Data summary

The number of *gittin* recorded in 2007 was the lowest recorded since 1989, and continues a declining trend started in 2003.

Table 3: Total *gittin*, 1998 to 2007

Year	Gittin
1998	233
1999	267
2000	270
2001	270
2002	258
2003	289
2004	274
2005	251
2006	248
2007	229

Burials and Cremations (Deaths)

Introduction

There are no official statistics recording a person's religion at the time of their death, therefore the CRU 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 2007 was 2,948 which represents a continuation of the decline recorded in recent years. Over the past decade the total number has declined by 1,000 deaths—a decline of 25%.

It is evident that the overall number of births (3,314 in 2006) is now greater than the overall number of deaths (3,107 in 2006 and 2,948 in 2007). However, **we do not consider this to indicate overall growth of Britain's Jewish population**. Rather, it is reflective of two separate demographic paths. At least one third of the births are to strictly Orthodox Jews but because of the young age structure of this group, they account for only a very small proportion of the deaths. On the other hand, the majority 'mainstream' Jewish population accounts for a relatively small proportion of the births but a high proportion of the deaths.

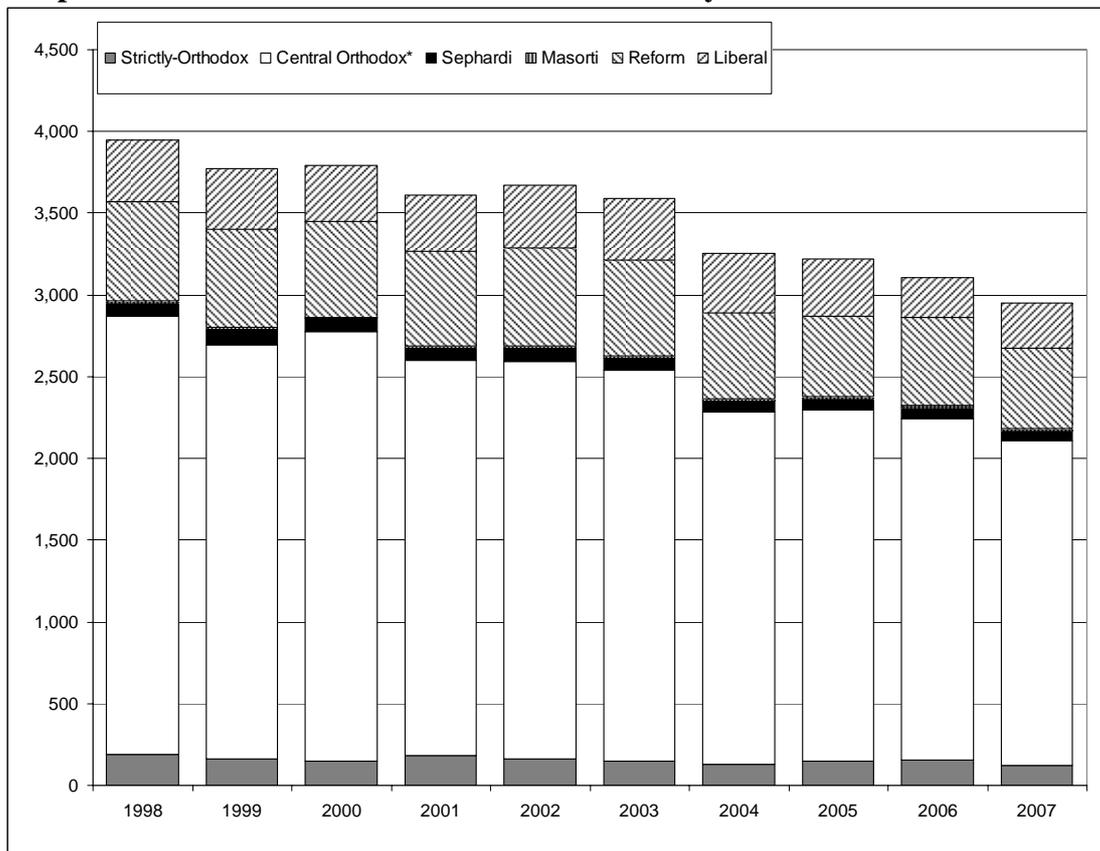
Table 4 – Total recorded burials and cremations by denomination* 1998 to 2007

Year	Strictly Orthodox	**Central Orthodox	Sephardi	Masorti	Reform	Liberal	Total
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
2007	122	1,986	63	15	491	271	2,948

* 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* 1998 to 2007



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

Cremation

Data show that in 2007, there were 327 Jewish cremations, amounting to 11% of the total number of deaths recorded, or 43% of those funerals carried out under Reform or Liberal auspices (the percentages in 2006 were 10% and 40% respectively). By comparison, around 72% of all deaths in the UK generally in 2006 (the latest year for which data are available) were followed by cremation.