



# Britain's Jewish Community Statistics 2010

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Board of Deputies of British Jews

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## Executive summary

### *Births*

The most recently available data submitted to the Board (2007) show that there were 1,702 religious circumcisions in that year, from which we infer a total of 3,313 Jewish 'births'. However, the presence of a number of unregistered *mohalim* suggests that the true figure may be somewhat higher than this.

What is undeniable is that, at least up until 2010, the number of births within the strictly Orthodox community has been continuing to increase to the extent that, even by a conservative estimate, they now comprise 40% or more of all Jewish births.

### *Marriages*

The Board received data on 836 Jewish marriages in the UK in 2010, the lowest figure since the Board's records began in 1901<sup>1</sup>, and a consistent downwards trend is now clearly identifiable. Further investigation is needed to determine the extent to which this decline is offset by an increase in marriages taking place overseas.

Over the last 30 years, the proportion of marriages taking place under the auspices of 'central Orthodox' synagogues (the United Synagogue and other synagogues of a similar orientation) has declined from almost two-thirds to just under a half. Over the same period, marriages taking place in the strictly Orthodox community have increased from less than one in ten of the total to more than a quarter.

### *Divorces*

Although data are still missing from one of the nine *batei din*, it is clear that the downwards trend in the number of *gittin* being issued is continuing. This may however be an indication that fewer Jewish peoples are seeking to obtain a religious divorce, and are opting for a civil divorce only.

### *Deaths*

A total of 2,734 burials or cremations under Jewish auspices were recorded in 2010, continuing the clear downwards trend that has been evident for several decades.

### *The 2011 census*

The first results of the 2011 census, which may be the last of its kind, are expected in July of this year. However, the first data relating to religion will not be available until the end of 2012 or early in 2013. Although the religion question was voluntary (as it was in 2001), it will nevertheless provide unsurpassed volumes of data which will prove invaluable to the community and its institutions.

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<sup>1</sup> See *Statistics of Jewish Marriages in Great Britain: 1901-1965* by SJ Prais and Marlena Schmool, published in the Jewish Journal of Sociology, 1967.

Furthermore, for the first (and possibly only) time we will have the opportunity to compare two censuses ten years apart, giving us an indication of trends over the period of a decade, which will shed more light on demographic, geographic and socio-economic changes in the community.

### *Conclusions*

The number of deaths being recorded each year is now significantly lower than the inferred number of births. We can therefore tentatively conclude that the community is experiencing a period of natural increase. Whether or not this extends to a net overall increase in the Jewish population is subject to some caveats, which are discussed in the final section of this report.

What is clear though is that the strictly Orthodox part of the community continues to exhibit characteristics (a younger age profile, earlier marriage and higher birth rate) which distinguish it from the rest of the community, and ensure that it comprises an increasing proportion of the Jewish population of the UK, and makes it the most significant component of the increase.

### *Acknowledgements*

Thanks are due to Martin Stern, for provision of *shalom zachar* data for Manchester, and to Dr David Graham and Dr Laura Staetsky, Senior Research Fellows at the Institute for Jewish Policy Research, for their constructive comments and suggestions.

## Introduction

The Board of Deputies has been collecting statistics relating to the British Jewish community for almost 50 years. This report is the latest in a series covering data relating to births, marriages, divorces and deaths, and covers the period up to 2010. The previous report, covering the period up to 2007, was published in November 2008<sup>2</sup>.

These data are collected on behalf of the whole community. It is the only exercise to do this on a regular 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, ie 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.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.bod.org.uk/content/CommunityStatistics2007.pdf>.

## Births

### *Introduction*

Religion data are not collected by any authority at the time of birth, therefore the Board of Deputies uses data on religious circumcisions (*brit milah*) as a proxy for calculating the size of the Jewish birth cohort. The data comprise 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 form of Jewish identification.

### *Understanding the data*

In order to derive the number of female Jewish births, the total number of circumcisions is factored up using the sex ratio of all births in the national population. This 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 an approximation of the Jewish birth cohort for the year.<sup>3</sup>

The Board collects data from the two bodies representing *mohalim* in the United Kingdom, the 'Initiation Society' (IS) and the 'Association of Reform & Liberal Mohalim' (ARLM). The choice of a *mohel* from one or other of these bodies may not necessarily reflect the denominational affiliation of the parents. It is not therefore possible to produce data split by denomination. It should be noted, however, that the IS will not carry out a circumcision on a boy whose father is Jewish but whose mother is not.

### *Missing data*

Both the IS and the ARLM have seen the retirement, within the last couple of years, of their long-serving administrators. In each case, this has resulted in some difficulties in obtaining recent data. The most recent year in respect of which complete data are available from both bodies is 2007.

Four *mohalim* who were registered with the IS in 2007 failed to provide figures for that year. The numbers of circumcisions carried out by these *mohalim* have been estimated based on data from previous years.

In addition, it is known that there are a number of practising *mohalim* who are not registered with either of the professional associations. A number of these are nevertheless 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 *circumcisions* have been carried out by these *mohalim*.

The Board will be carrying out further investigations over the coming months, in order to obtain as much of this missing data as possible.

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<sup>3</sup> The results of the 2011 census will provide another indicator of the number of Jewish births in recent years, but will also be incomplete, since some Jewish families will inevitably have chosen not to answer the religion question.

Furthermore, 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 *mohalim* of whom the Board is unaware, hence the figures in this report are necessarily conservative estimates.

### Data summary

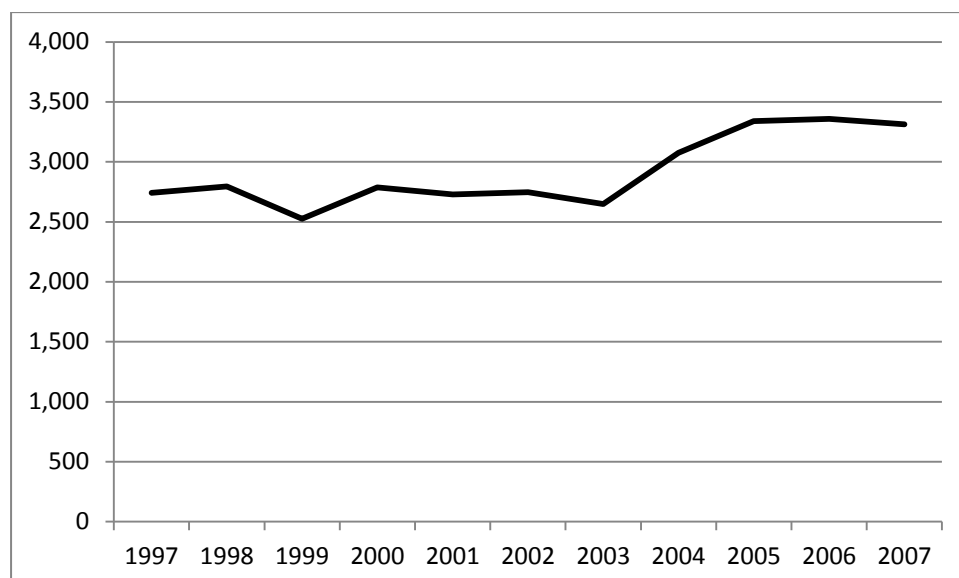
**Table 1: Circumcisions and inferred births, 1997-2007**

Year	Circumcisions collected by the Board	Multiplier*	Inferred total Jewish 'births'	3-year 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	3,258
2006	1,717	1.955	3,357	3,336
2007	1,702	1.947	3,313	-

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

Although the number of circumcisions was almost unchanged over the period from 2005 to 2007, the trend over the past decade continues to be upwards.

**Graph 1: Total Jewish inferred births, 1997-2007**



### *Strictly Orthodox births*

Although more recent data are not available for the community as a whole, they are available from other sources for the strictly Orthodox communities in Stamford Hill (North London) and in Manchester<sup>4</sup>. In these two areas alone, the number of boys born to strictly Orthodox Jewish families was at least 546 in 2007, rising to 710 in 2010. (The figure for 2011 was down to 663. It is too soon to say whether this means that 2010 was simply an exceptional year, or whether the increase in strictly Orthodox births is slowing down.)

This would infer a total of over 1,000 births (male and female) in 2007, almost 1,400 in 2010, and around 1,300 in 2011. Once an allowance is made for the communities in North West London and Gateshead, a conservative estimate would be that the strictly Orthodox community now accounts for 40% or more of all Jewish births.

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<sup>4</sup> Notices of *shalom zachar* celebrations, which take place among many strictly Orthodox Jews following the birth of a male child, are published weekly in the *Kol Mevasser* newsletter in Stamford Hill. Corresponding data for Manchester are collated by Martin Stern of Salford, who has kindly shared the results with the Board. The use of *shalom zachar* data is addressed more fully in *Population Trends among Britain's Strictly Orthodox Jews*, by Daniel Vulkan and David Graham, published by the Board of Deputies in 2008 (<http://www.bod.org.uk/content/StrictlyOrthodox.pdf>).



## Marriages

### *Introduction*

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

### *Understanding the data*

The way in which marriages are recorded in England and Wales is complex and affects the likelihood of the Board 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 marriages between a Jew and a non-Jew, data are also missing. This is because such marriages cannot legally take place under Jewish auspices, despite the significant size of this group<sup>5</sup>, although both the Movement for Reform Judaism and Liberal Judaism do permit their rabbis to carry out subsequent blessings of such unions. Further, same-sex unions (civil partnerships) are also not recorded here whether or not both partners are Jewish.

The Board collects data from the marriage authorisation certificates issued by the Office of the Chief Rabbi (for the United Synagogue and other synagogues operating under his authority, for those marriages which are known to have subsequently proceeded); the total number of marriages carried out each year by constituents of the Federation of Synagogues; and details of marriages carried out by a further 69 individual synagogues.

A total of nine of these synagogues did not provide data for one or more of the years 2008 to 2010, and it has therefore been necessary to estimate the missing figures based on previous years' data. In each year, the total of the estimated marriages amounted to approximately 1% of the total marriages in that year. A further five synagogues (all but one of them strictly Orthodox) were unable to provide full data on age and previous marital status.

Some preceding years' figures have also been amended in respect of one synagogue for which more accurate data has recently been obtained.

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<sup>5</sup> The 2001 census (table C0400) reported 18,000 people in England and Wales who identified themselves as Jewish, and were married to someone who identified as a member of a different religion. A further 8,300 were married to someone who reported 'No religion' or did not answer the question.

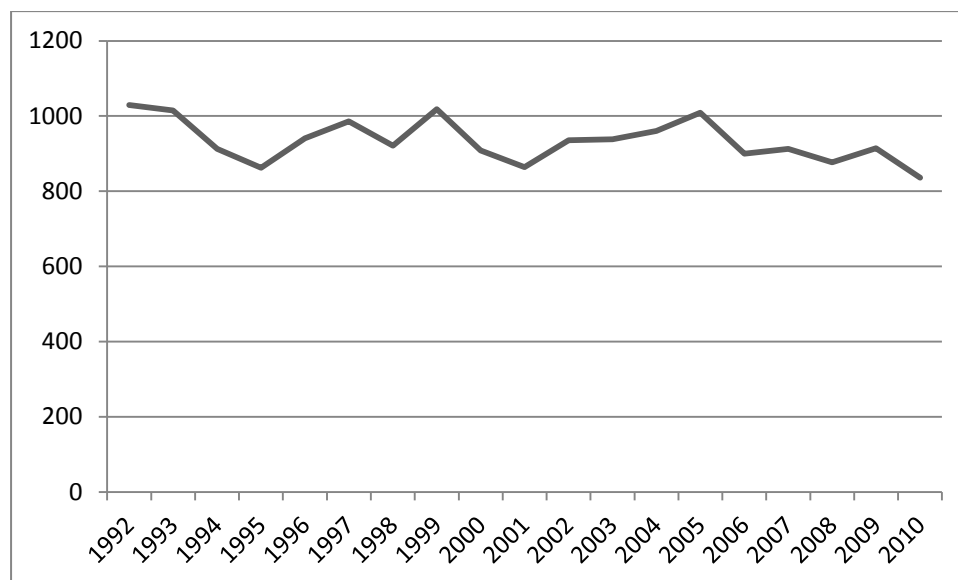
*Data summary*

**Table 2: Total marriages by denomination, 1992-2010**

Year	Strictly Orthodox	Central Orthodox*	Sephardi	Masorti	Reform	Liberal	Total
1992	166	580	47	22	159	55	1,029
1993	158	575	50	8	174	50	1,015
1994	140	494	49	16	150	64	913
1995	150	480	55	9	132	36	862
1996	195	539	49	21	104	33	941
1997	186	561	43	20	128	48	986
1998	195	496	48	19	111	52	921
1999	215	543	40	28	144	48	1,018
2000	197	490	44	24	101	52	908
2001	176	481	32	22	113	40	864
2002	217	469	65	25	107	53	936
2003	238	472	49	36	98	45	938
2004	241	472	48	29	131	39	960
2005	275	446	48	30	162	48	1,009
2006	231	460	39	43	94	33	900
2007	243	464	45	33	97	31	913
2008	240	448	42	33	97	17	877
2009	268	431	42	35	105	33	914
2010	248	402	42	37	84	23	836

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

**Graph 2: Total Jewish marriages, 1992-2010**



In our report in 2007, we concluded that the number of marriages had been flat over the preceding decade. The last few years' data, however, do suggest a gradual decline in the number of Jewish marriages taking place in Britain.

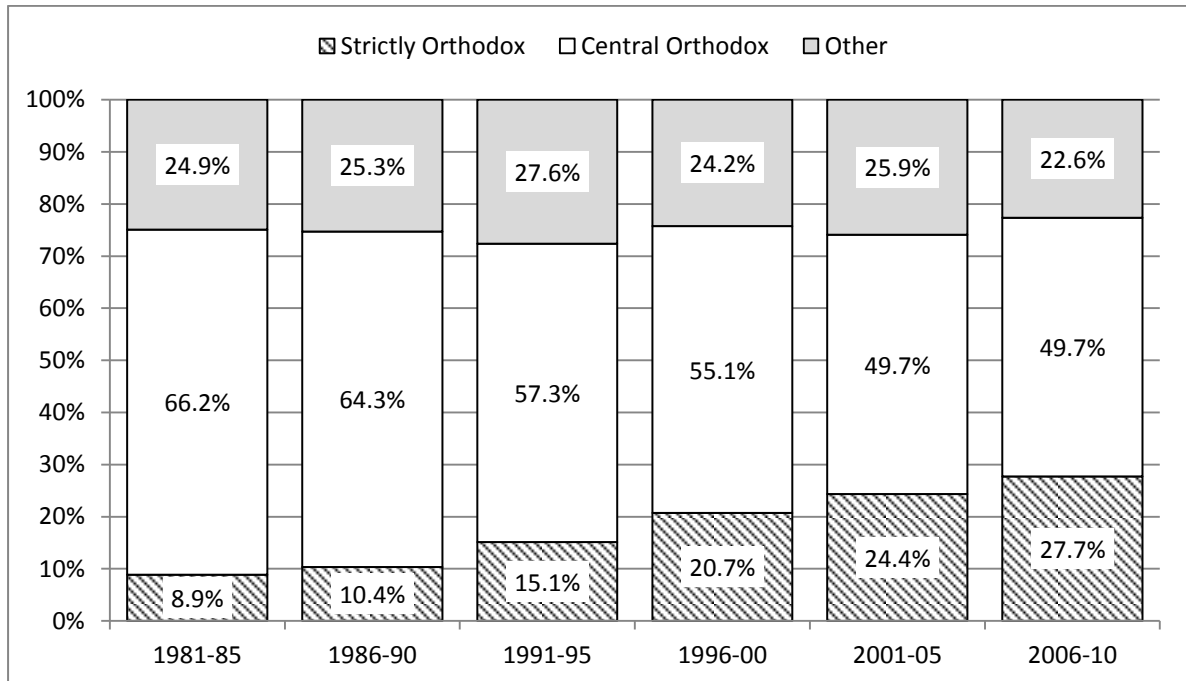
It is known that a number of marriages between UK residents take place overseas each year (particularly in Israel). In 2011, the London Beth Din issued almost 150 certificates

(confirming Jewish status) to individuals marrying abroad, and we hope to be able to obtain further data which may indicate whether any trend is detectable in the number of certificates issued.

*Marriages by denomination*

Graph 3 shows the relative proportion of marriages by denomination for all marriages from 1981 to 2010, in five-year age bands. Whereas in the first period (1981-85), close to two-thirds of all recorded Jewish marriages were through central Orthodox synagogues (ie the United Synagogue and other synagogues of a similar orientation), this had fallen to just less than half by the end of the period (2006-10). By contrast, the proportion of strictly Orthodox marriages increased over the same period from less than one in ten in 1981-85, to over a quarter by 2006-10.

**Graph 3: Marriages by denomination, 1981-2010**



*Remarriage*

Marital status was available for 556 of the 836 couples getting married in 2010. Of these, most (81%) were first marriages for both parties; in 10% one of the parties was remarrying following a divorce; in 7% both parties were remarrying following a divorce; and in the remaining 2% one or other party had been widowed (and neither had been divorced). These are very similar to the percentages in the other years for which these data are available (2005 onwards).

By contrast, within the general population of England and Wales, only 66% of marriages in 2010 were first marriages for both parties. Twenty percent involved one party remarrying following a divorce, with 13% involving two divorcees. However, for religious marriages

(most of which would have been Christian), which currently make up just under a third of all marriages, the percentages are very close to those for Jewish marriages.<sup>6</sup>

### *Age at marriage*

Data on age at marriage was available for 555 of the 588 marriages not taking place among the strictly Orthodox community. These show average ages at marriage of 33 years for men and 31 years for women. For weddings in which both partners were marrying for the first time, the average ages were 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 we do not have the data to confirm this.

Among the population of England and Wales as a whole, for marriages taking place in 2010, the average ages were 36 for men and 34 for women; for first marriages, the average ages were 32 and 30 respectively.<sup>7</sup> So, Jews are on average marrying two to three years earlier than the general population.

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<sup>6</sup> Office for National Statistics, *Marriages in England Wales (provisional), 2010*: <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/vsob1/marriages-in-england-and-wales--provisional-/2010/rtd-marriage-summary-statistics-2010--provisional-.xls>, Tables 3 and 4.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, Table 5.

## Divorces

### *Introduction*

There are no official statistics on the religion of divorcing couples, therefore the Board of Deputies 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, ie 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 recent years continues the declining trend started in 2003.

**Table 3: Total *gittin*, 1992-2010**

Year	Gittin	Year	Gittin
1992	277	2002	258
1993	275	2003	289
1994	236	2004	274
1995	230	2005	251
1996	272	2006	248
1997	233	2007	235
1998	233	2008	217*
1999	267	2009	220*
2000	270	2010	221*
2001	270		

\* Figures from one of the nine *batei din*<sup>8</sup> were not available at the time of publication, and an estimate has been used, based on the average of the preceding three years.

The divorce rate amongst the general population of England and Wales (roughly, the number of couples divorcing each year per thousand married couples at the midpoint of that year) fell from around 13.0 in 2001 to around 11.0 in 2010<sup>9</sup>.

An accurate divorce rate for the Jewish community cannot be calculated, since figures are not available for the number of married couples. However, the 2001 census (see footnote on page 9) showed that there were 42,700 cases in England and Wales of couples, both of whom had identified as Jewish in response to the religion question. A crude '*get* rate' for that year would therefore be around 6.3. The actual rate will be even lower, since the figure of 42,700 excludes those Jewish couples who did not both identify as Jewish, as well as those Jewish couples living outside England and Wales.

<sup>8</sup> The nine *batei din* from which the Board collects data are the Orthodox *batei din* of London, Manchester, Leeds and Glasgow, and those of the Spanish & Portuguese Jews' Congregation, the Union of Orthodox Hebrew Congregations, the Federation of Synagogues, the Masorti movement and the Movement for Reform Judaism. The Liberal movement does not itself issue *gittin*, but does encourage individuals wishing to remarry in a Liberal synagogue to obtain a *get* where applicable.

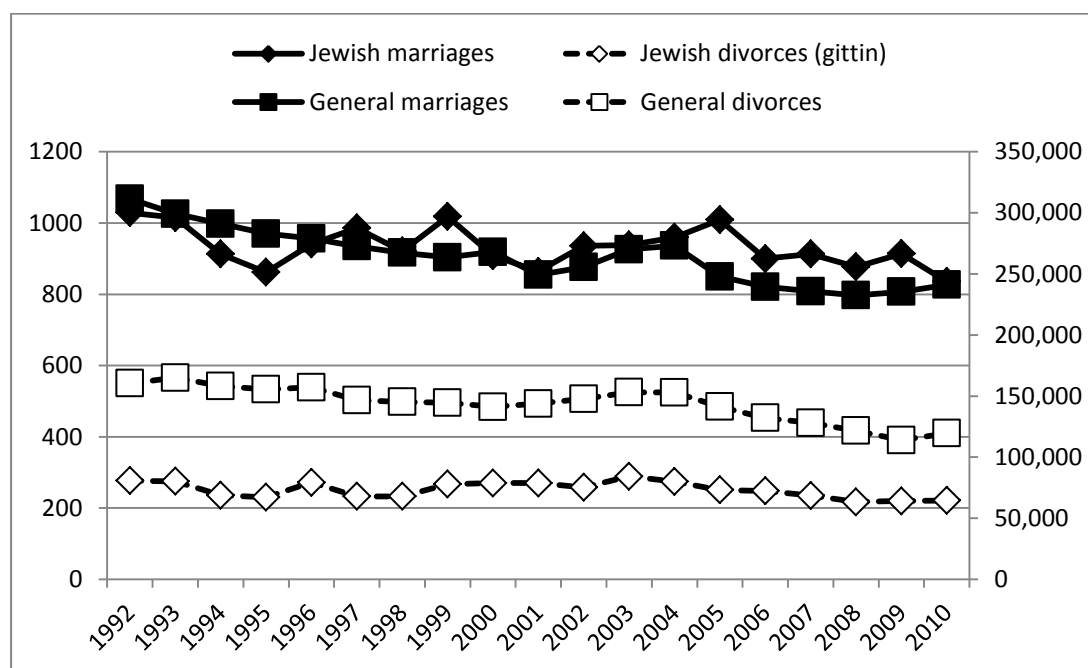
<sup>9</sup> Office for National Statistics, *Divorces in England and Wales, 2010*:

<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/vsob1/divorces-in-england-and-wales/2010/divorces-in-england-and-wales---2010-data-tables.zip>

Graph 4 compares the number of Jewish marriages and divorces (ie *gittin*) each year from 1992 to 2010 with those in the general population of England and Wales. Although the number of divorces in any particular year is not directly comparable to the number of marriages that year the graph does confirm that, if the propensity to divorce in the Jewish community is similar to that in the wider community, a significant number of couples are not obtaining a *get*.

It also suggests that the trends in marriages and *gittin* in the Jewish community are broadly similar to marriages and divorces in the general population of England Wales. The ratios of divorces to marriages in both populations have remained relatively stable with both showing, if anything, a gradual decrease.

**Graph 4: Comparison of Jewish (left hand axis) and general England and Wales (right-hand axis) marriages and divorces, 1992-2010**



## Deaths

### *Introduction*

There are no official statistics recording a person's religion at the time of their death, therefore the Board 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, ie 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*

Previous statistics have included a number of cremations carried out for people known to be Jewish, but without the involvement of any synagogue or Jewish burial society. These data are becoming increasingly difficult to obtain, and there is also a risk that they may be far from complete.

Since, as noted above, the intention is to record data relating to people who identify with the Jewish community in some formal way, it has been decided to exclude these figures going forwards. For consistency, statistics relating to previous years have been restated below to reflect this change of approach. This has resulted in reductions in the stated numbers of deaths in each year from 1996 to 2005 of, on average, approximately 150, with smaller reductions in the preceding and following years. A majority of these cremations had been attributed to the Liberal movement.

The Board collects data from the burial societies of the United Synagogue, the Federation of Synagogues, the Spanish & Portuguese Jews' Congregation and Liberal Judaism; from the Adath Yisroel Burial Society, the Machzikei Hadass Burial Board, the Western Charitable Foundation (WCF) and the Jewish Joint Burial Society (JJBS); the Manchester & District Council of Synagogues and the Merseyside Jewish Representative Council, each of which collate data from their respective areas; and a further 77 individual synagogues or burial societies.

The WCF and the JJBS are each responsible for burials across a number of different denominations. An accurate denominational split is not available for years prior to 2005, and it has therefore been assumed that the numbers of Masorti (WCF and JJBS) and Liberal (JJBS) burials for earlier years were the same as in 2005. Whilst burials carried out through these two societies comprise a very small proportion of Liberal burials, they include all Masorti burials. This explains the unchanging figure for Masorti burials over this period, which are however themselves a very small proportion of the total number of Jewish burials.

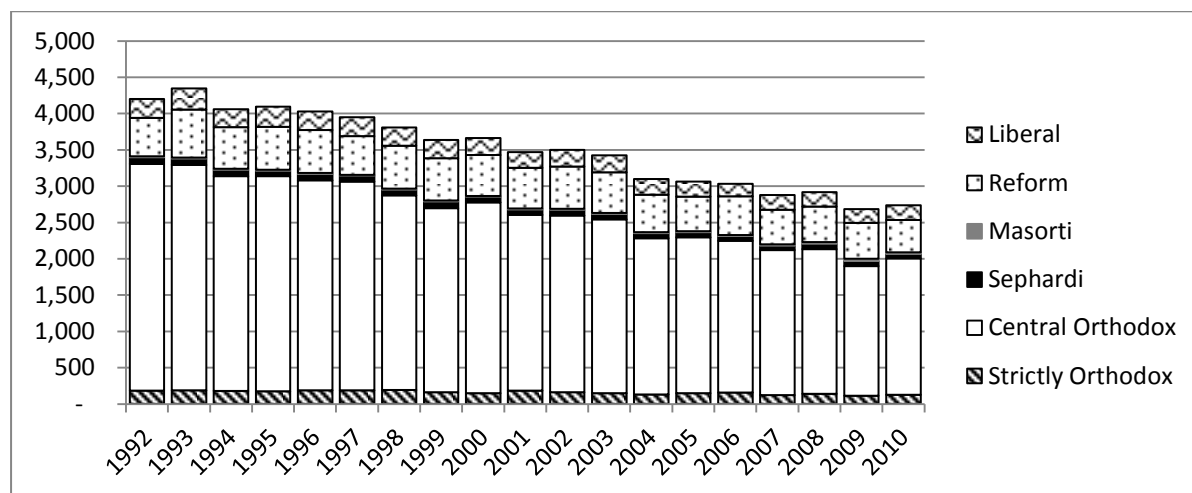
Eight synagogues or burial societies did not provide data for one or more of the years 2008 to 2010, and it has therefore been necessary to estimate the missing figures based on previous years' data. In each year, the total of the estimated burials and cremations amounted to less than 1% of the total burials and cremations in that year.

The total number of recorded Jewish deaths in 2010 was 2,734 which represents a continuation of the decline recorded in recent years.

**Table 4: Total recorded burials and cremations by denomination, 1992-2010**

Year	Strictly Orthodox	Central Orthodox	Sephardi	Masorti	Reform	Liberal	Total
1992	183	3,120	96	13	527	261	4,200
1993	186	3,106	87	13	662	292	4,346
1994	179	2,959	86	13	576	246	4,059
1995	175	2,962	77	13	590	279	4,096
1996	189	2,889	89	13	591	257	4,028
1997	186	2,875	83	13	533	257	3,947
1998	191	2,680	81	13	589	253	3,807
1999	160	2,535	94	13	582	250	3,634
2000	149	2,626	78	13	561	233	3,660
2001	184	2,420	74	13	559	219	3,469
2002	161	2,434	78	13	584	228	3,498
2003	149	2,393	74	13	560	235	3,424
2004	130	2,150	71	13	516	218	3,098
2005	149	2,148	69	13	478	205	3,062
2006	157	2,088	68	12	534	173	3,032
2007	122	1,997	63	15	478	203	2,878
2008	141	1,993	73	22	490	199	2,918
2009	111	1,789	70	28	497	189	2,684
2010	124	1,882	59	24	445	200	2,734

**Graph 5: Burials and cremations by denomination, 1992-2010**



*Cremation*

There were 233 cremations carried out through synagogues or burial societies in 2010, amounting to 11% of the total number of deaths recorded, or 36% of those funerals carried out under Reform or Liberal auspices. By comparison, around 73% of all deaths in the UK generally in 2010 were followed by cremation.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.srgw.demon.co.uk/CremSoc4/Stats/National/ProgressF.html>.



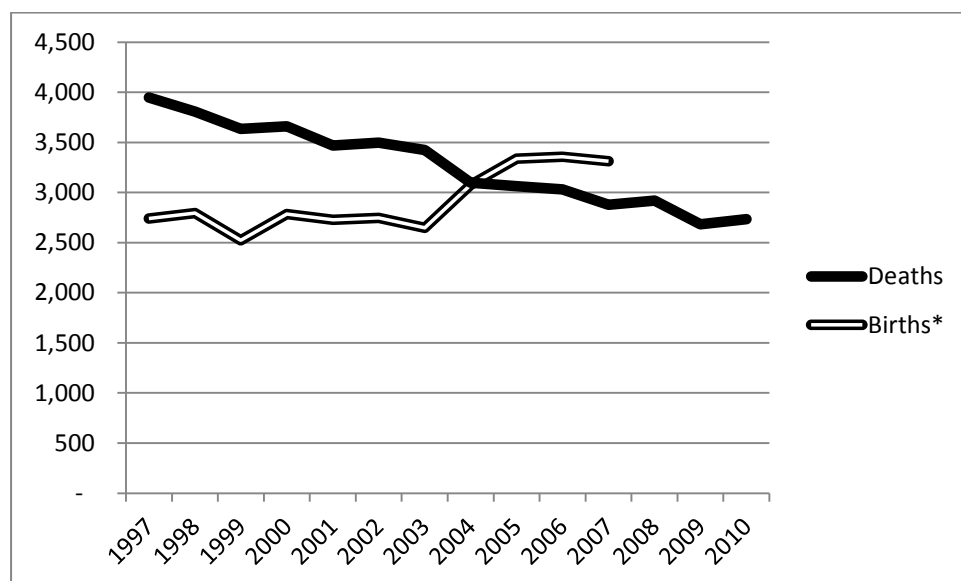
## Jewish natural increase

It is becoming increasingly clear that the community's demographic profile has turned a corner and, in every year since 2005, the number of inferred births has exceeded the number of recorded deaths. Graph 6 shows that, over the three years from 2005 to 2007, there were a total of 1,037 more Jewish births than deaths - ie a natural growth rate of about 350 people per year. Although there are two important caveats to this data (noted below) and it is too soon to say whether this pattern will continue in the long term, this does appear to represent a new trend which has not been seen for many decades.

Whilst birth and death remain the main routes into and out of the community, there is no accurate means of assessing migration to or from the UK and, whilst data may be available on the number of people choosing to convert to Judaism, it is not possible to determine how many people decide each year that they no longer wish to identify as a part of the Jewish community (or, conversely, that they wish to return to the community).

Nevertheless, given that strictly Orthodox births have continued to increase beyond 2007 (see above), it is highly likely that the community is indeed experiencing natural increase as a result of this considerable growth.

**Graph 6: Jewish deaths and inferred births, 1997-2010**



\* Data for inferred births is, as explained earlier in the report, incomplete for the period after 2007. However, the increase in strictly Orthodox births over this period indicates that the total number is also clearly continuing to increase.