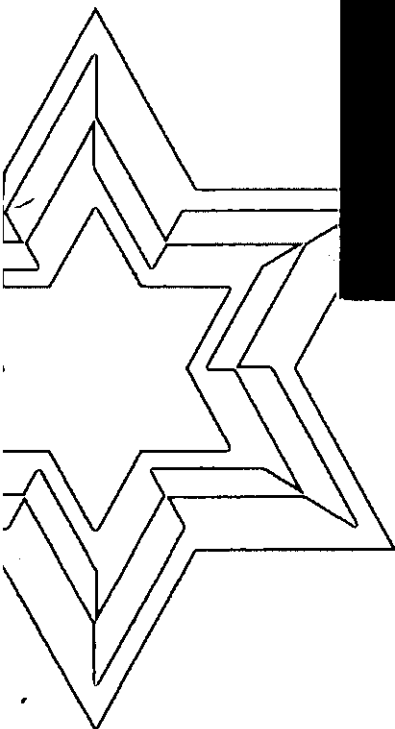


The Board of Deputies of British Jews



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BRITISH SYNAGOGUE MEMBERSHIP IN 2001

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The authors welcome requests relating to the analysis of data collected in this survey from bona fide researcher and students.

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PREFACE

This analysis by the Community Research Unit of the Board of Deputies follows those for 1977, 1983, 1990 and 1996. The figures presented relate to early 2001.

Area listings of individual synagogue memberships are available on request to cru@bod.org.uk.

INTRODUCTION

This booklet provides data on synagogue membership in the United Kingdom in 2001. These were based on the records of major London synagogal organisations and of individual synagogues throughout the Regions. Our report covers the whole religious spectrum of British Jewry each section of which has its own criterion for membership. It does **not** cover all the British Jewish population; some 30% are not linked directly or indirectly to a synagogue.

Historically, the pater familias held membership to cover his wife, any children under the age of majority and any daughters over that age. Sons who were of age were expected to have membership in their own right. Insofar as they have formal membership, this pattern still prevails for Orthodox synagogues but is often augmented by special membership schemes for younger persons. More recently there has been a drive for women to take out additional memberships in their own right in order to vote in synagogue elections and to serve in offices. These are not included in our statistics if that would involve double counting. When a male head of household dies, his widow usually keeps up the membership.

On the other hand, many (mainly non-orthodox) synagogues have 'family memberships' where either husband and wife are each considered as individual members or the family is deemed to be one member.

In the tables that follow the numbers provided to us have been checked with synagogues and standardised as far as possible to ensure comparability and to permit calculation of 'household membership'. Within the confines of the figures as provided it is not possible to calculate the size of each household. Our enquiries suggest that for the most part, household membership covers at least (married) partners but in other cases it may represent a single-parent family with children, within all sections of the community.

A problem arises in categorising the community according to its religious nature. As in other religions, Judaism displays a continuum from non-adherence (to any belief or ritual) to complete observance of *halachah* (Talmudic law). It is inappropriate to distinguish between degrees of observance within Orthodoxy, particularly when most Mainstream Orthodox synagogues have a core of strictly observant members. Thus we have called synagogues where all members are halachically observant *Union of Orthodox*, since the majority of them are linked to the umbrella organisation Union of Orthodox Hebrew Congregations. The remaining majority of Ashkenazi Orthodox synagogues are grouped as Mainstream Orthodox. This distinction is maintained in the tables which follow.

Synagogal Groups

Six synagogal groupings may be distinguished in the United Kingdom. The analytical groups in the annotated tables relate to affiliation given in the full congregational listings in line with the categories set out below:

Liberal comprises congregations of the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues (ULPS) and, for historical reasons, the now-independent Belsize Square Synagogue.

Mainstream Orthodox covers the London-based United Synagogue (US) and Federation of Synagogues (Fed) together with those regional synagogues which recognise the authority of the Chief Rabbi and a small number of London and regional independent Ashkenazi orthodox congregations.

Masorti (Conservative) congregations are found mainly in Greater London. Their theological position is between Orthodox and Reform.

Reform includes constituents of the umbrella-organisation Reform Synagogues of Great Britain (RSGB) and the independent Westminster Synagogue.

Sephardi synagogues are those of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews' Congregation, the longest settled section of British Jewry, found in London and Manchester.

Union of Orthodox (UO) takes in those congregations which expect strict adherence to *halacha* from all their members. They are mostly under the umbrella of the Union of Orthodox Hebrew Congregations, established in 1926.

Coverage

The caveats set down in earlier listings still hold good.

- Synagogue membership numbers do not equal population counts even though the majority of identifying British Jews belong to a synagogue.
- Total household numbers are very slightly inflated because of dual memberships, which have been judged by 2: These occur when a household, as a unit or an individual, belongs to more than one synagogue, when more than one person at a single address has individual membership, or when husband and wife are each considered individual members. Slight overstatement of households occurs because people in residential homes are included, via the single member counts, as households.
- Particularly in London boroughs, synagogue membership cannot be taken as a guide to the size of the local Jewish population. Some London boroughs have no synagogues, but this does not mean complete absence of Jews from those areas. Other boroughs have synagogues - established by earlier generations - whose current members live outside the borough boundary. Some synagogues, in areas of sparse Jewish population or in the centre of large towns, have members living in a wide catchment area.

A. Regional Distribution

Over the years, it has become clear that these membership analyses are very often used as a proxy for the distribution of Jewish population. We are also aware that, in the 25 years centres of gravity of communities have shifted particularly as regards what is broadly known as Greater London.

Since the first listing in 1977, Greater London and the Rest of the South East have been separated out in the tables but, as the Jewish population has moved, progressively fewer 'Greater London' members reside in the local authority boundaries of the Greater London authority. In order to show the outcomes of this movement we have introduced a table for what we have termed the Extended London Area which distinguishes Inner London, Outer London and Contiguous Areas. Where the simple term 'Greater London' is used, this refers to synagogues situated within the Greater London Authority administrative boundary.

The figures for membership in all these tables cover household memberships augmented by single adult memberships but excluding those married women who have separate membership in order to obtain voting rights and young adults who live in the parental home.¹ As we explained in the introduction, studies² have shown that 30% of the estimated core population are not affiliated to a synagogue. The data in this booklet relate to the remaining 70%.

1: Congregations and Membership 2001

Region	Congregation s	Membership	%
Greater London	192	57,835	65.9
Rest of South East	49	9,190	10.4
South West	9	1,498	1.7
East Anglia	6	344	0.4
East Midlands	6	701	0.8
West Midlands	9	1,230	1.4
Greater Manchester	40	7,256	8.3
Rest of North West	12	2,028	2.3
Yorkshire & Humberside	16	4,007	4.6
North	5	810	0.9
Scotland	11	1,952	2.2
Wales	5	561	0.6
Northern Ireland	1	128	0.15
United Kingdom	362	87,790	100.0

¹ Full listings that separate out household and individual members are available from the Community Research Unit.

² S Miller, M Schmool and A Lerman, *Social and Political Attitudes of British Jews*, (London; Institute for Jewish Policy Research, 1996)

In 2001 there were 362 congregations in the United Kingdom with a total membership of 87,790. In addition 14,848 married women were recorded as having membership in their own right; they are not included in the analysis. There has been a net decrease of 3 synagogues since 1996. The number of married women with individual membership rose by approximately 4,300 between 1996 and 2001 with the increase being confined to Greater London.

Approximately 70% of all synagogue members belong to congregations in the Extended London Area whereas only 56% (203) of all congregations are situated there. This gives an average congregational size of 305 members in this area compared with an average of 163 members in the Regions i.e. outside the Extended London Area. In both geographical sectors, the average has fallen – by 4% in London and by 13% in the Regions.

The London Boroughs of Barnet, Harrow and Hillingdon, together with the congregations of South Hertfordshire that touch on Greater London, account for approximately 41% of Greater London (and 29% of national) synagogue household membership. Hackney, with its predominantly strictly orthodox character, accounts for 11 percent of synagogue-affiliated households in Greater London and Redbridge with the congregations of Southwest Essex take in just under 10%.

Of the 159 congregations outside the Extended London Area, 70 are in eight major Jewish centres such as Manchester, Leeds and Brighton while 89 are in 70 other locations, throughout the United Kingdom from Scotland to the South-Coast.

There is continual change in the number of congregations with new groups being established and others closing. Since the compilation was completed we have been notified of two closures but the membership figures have not been corrected because members were absorbed into existing congregations.

2: Regional Change 1996 to 2001

Region	Membership		Net change 1990-1996	
	1996	2001	Number	%
Greater London	61505	57835	-3670	-5.9
Rest of South East	9610	9190	-420	-4.4
South West	1437	1498	61	+4.2
East Anglia	334	344	10	+3.0
East Midlands	701	701	---	----
West Midlands	1517	1230	-287	-18.9
Greater Manchester	7846	7256	-590	-7.5
Rest of North West	2246	2028	-218	-9.7
Yorkshire & Humberside	4157	4007	-150	-3.6
North	1111	810	-301	-27.1
Scotland	2341	1952	-389	-16.6
Wales	653	561	-92	-14.1
Northern Ireland	129	128	-1	---
United Kingdom	93684	87790	-5894	-6.3

Table 2 compares membership by area for 1996 and 2001. The 192 congregations situated within Greater London boroughs in 2001 had an average membership of 301, compared with 193 congregations in 1996 each then with an average membership of 319. In total the membership in this strictly defined area fell by 6%. Between 1990 and 1996 in there had been a 10% fall in membership, so the rate of decline has slowed down.

As can be seen in Table 2. with the exception of slight increases in the Southwest and East Anglia, regional area membership decreased. The greatest absolute regional decline was in the Greater Manchester area (a reduction of 590) and the largest proportionate decline was in the North with a loss of more that a quarter (27%).

Table 3 brings together data³ over the past quarter-century for an extended London area in order to indicate trends for what is generally considered as London Jewry⁴. The table summarises synagogue membership in Greater London and the contiguous areas of Southwest Essex, South Hertfordshire and North Surrey. The data may be taken as showing movements within the wider London geographical area over 25 years.

3: Extended London Area Membership, 1977 to 2001

	1977	1983	1990	1996	2001
Area					
Inner London	35179	32390	27153	23373	21965
Outer London	39160	41089	40477	38161	35870
Contiguous areas	1443	2050	3310	3538	4106
Total	75782	75529	70940	65072	61941

As discussed above, confining ourselves to the Greater London boroughs as a definition of the London Jewish community neglects recent population movements, particularly northwards to Essex and Hertfordshire, and so Table 3 looks in greater depth at trends in the Extended London Area from 1977 to 2001.

The totals show that, taking the area as a whole, membership has fallen by 18% over the period. Inner London has fallen by 38% and Outer London, after increasing a little in the early 1980s, has lost 8.5% of its synagogue membership. In contrast, synagogue affiliation in the contiguous areas has almost tripled. Nevertheless, the declining numbers in Inner and Outer London are not compensated for by this increase. These

³ From Board of Deputies compilations of synagogue membership for each of the given years.

⁴ *Inner London* incorporates the following boroughs:- Camden, City of London, Hackney, Hammersmith, Haringey, Islington*, Kensington/Chelsea, Lambeth, Lewisham, Newham, Southwark*, Tower Hamlets, Wandsworth*, City of Westminster. *Outer London* incorporates:- Barnet, Brent, Bromley, Croydon, Ealing, Enfield, Greenwich*, Harrow, Havering, Hillingdon, Hounslow, Kingston, Merton, Redbridge, Richmond, Sutton, Waltham Forest. Boroughs with an * do not have a synagogue.

data strongly illustrate the movement of London Jewry from urban areas through to suburban, and more recently, dormitory locations.

The proportional changes support this interpretation. In 1977 46% of synagogue affiliated households belonged to congregation in the Inner London boroughs; by 2001 this proportion had reduced to 35%. During that time, the proportion in contiguous areas rose from 2% to 7%. By 2001 Outer London and the contiguous areas accounted for almost two-thirds of synagogue membership.

While for the most part people live near the synagogues to which they belong, Inner London figures do not indicate residential patterns; many members of centrally located synagogues live some distance away. On the other hand, increase in membership in the suburbs adjacent to Greater London shows migration to these areas and locally resident households. Synagogue leaders in those places have made great efforts to recruit members and a number of new congregations, Orthodox and Progressive, have been established to cater for newcomers. We may therefore say that the synagogue membership underestimates the size of the London Jewish *population* residing in the suburbs.

Indeed, since the 1960s, both sample surveys and comparisons of population estimates with extrapolations from synagogue data have suggested that some 30% of self-identifying Jews are not affiliated to synagogues. If we accept this constant ratio, then these data confirm that the Jewish population of Greater London has fallen over the period despite immigration from the Regions since the 1950s.

B: Synagogue groupings**4: Membership by Synagogal Grouping, 2001**

	Congregations	Membership	
		No	%
UNITED KINGDOM			
Mainstream Orthodox	182	50043	57.0
Reform	41	17745	20.2
Liberal	30	7941	9.0
Union of Orthodox	86	7509	8.6
Sephardi	15	3096	3.5
Masorti	8	1456	1.7
Total	362	87790	100
GREATER LONDON			
Mainstream Orthodox	77	29407	50.8
Reform	16	12032	20.8
Liberal	13	6535	11.3
Union of Orthodox	68	5828	10.0
Sephardi	12	2646	4.6
Masorti	6	1387	2.4
Total	192	57835	100
REGIONS			
Mainstream Orthodox	105	20636	68.8
Reform	25	5713	19.1
Liberal	17	1406	4.7
Union of Orthodox	18	1681	5.6
Sephardi	3	450	1.5
Masorti	2	69	0.2
Total	170	29955	100

For historical reasons Mainstream Orthodoxy is the major synagogue grouping in British Jewry and the London area provides the widest choice in synagogue type. Membership of a particular type of synagogue does not necessarily reflect differences in level of practice, for example, between all members of Mainstream and the Union of Orthodox congregations.

In 2001 the proportion of synagogue members affiliated to the Mainstream Orthodox stood at 57% nationally and showed a marked difference between Greater London and Regional membership. In the Greater London boroughs, Mainstream Orthodox take in 51% of all memberships, while in the Regions they are 69%. In the areas contiguous to Greater London, three-quarter of all synagogue memberships were in Mainstream Orthodox synagogues but, nevertheless, the Mainstream Orthodox were still only 52% of the extended London area members.

Progressive synagogues (including Masorti) account for just under one in every three memberships with a slight bias to membership in the London area (however defined).

Nationally, just under 2% of synagogue memberships are in Masorti synagogues, which were included in Mainstream Orthodox figures in earlier years.

5: Change in synagogue groupings, 1996-2001

	Membership		Net change 1996-2001	
	1996	2001	Number	%
Mainstream Orthodox	56895	50043	-6852	-12.0
Masorti	1413	1456	+43	+3.0
Union of Orthodox	6622	7509	+887	+13.4
Liberal	7971	7941	-30	-0.4
Reform	17614	17745	131	0.7
Sephardi	3169	3096	-73	-2.3
Total	93684	87790	-5894	-6.3

The loss of synagogue members in the late 1990s is strongly concentrated in the Mainstream Orthodox section. This may be taken as the outcome of historical demographic trends combined with recent membership movement towards progressive sectors.⁵ The 12% loss in the Mainstream Orthodox between 1996 and 2001 was approximately twice the national average (-6.3%) while other groups either increased or were generally stable. Reform, Liberal and Union of Orthodox membership levels were all higher in 2001 than they had been in 1996 but even by combining Mainstream Orthodox and Masorti data (as was the practice until 1996) does not raise the Mainstream figure above the 1996 number. Reform, Masorti and the Union all showed absolute increases in membership between 1996 to 2001.

The combination of these changes has led to a realignment of comparative membership strengths over the decade. During that time, Mainstream Orthodox memberships fell from accounting for 68% of all synagogue memberships to taking in 57% of the lower total; the Union of Orthodox share nationally rose over the same period from 6% to 8.6%. Reform moved from 17% to 20% and Liberal increased from 6% to 9%.

⁵ See *Profile of British Jewry* by M Schmool and F. Cohen (Board of Deputies 1998), pp 19-20

Appendix 1: Membership by Standard Region for United Kingdom

REGION	COUNTY	Congrs	2001				1995
			Total	H/hld	Individuals		Total
					Males	Females	
SOUTH EAST	Bedfordshire	2	118	87	7	24	169
	Berkshire	3	874	688	28	58	723
	Buckinghamshire	3	169	83	35	51	143
	East Sussex	6	1511	1369	97	45	1896
	Essex	9	2258	1866	152	240	2330
	Greater London	192	57835	52011	5173	10651	61505
	Hampshire	3	195	150	9	36	207
	Hertfordshire	12	3411	2612	259	540	3082
	Kent	6	219	135	42	42	276
	Oxfordshire	1	273	273	0	0	244
	Surrey	3	392	240	53	109	497
West Sussex	1	20	20	0	0	43	
SOUTH WEST	Avon	2	176	83	44	49	152
	Devon	3	150	144	2	4	133
	Dorset	2	1077	797	77	173	1065
	Gloucestershire	1	70	30	20	20	66
	Wiltshire	1	25	15	5	5	21
EAST ANGLIA	Cambridgeshire	4	242	211	13	18	228
	Norfolk	2	102	80	8	14	106
EAST MIDLANDS	Leicestershire	2	201	128	25	48	245
	Lincolnshire	1	25	11	4	10	0
	Northamptonshire	1	61	42	5	14	67
	Nottinghamshire	2	414	193	97	124	389

REGION	COUNTY	2001					1995
		Congrs		H/hld	Individuals		
		Total			Males	Total Females	
WEST							
MIDLANDS	Herefordshire	1	35	16	6	13	0
	Staffordshire	1	34	15	11	8	29
	West Midlands	7	1161	811	147	203	1488
NORTH WEST	Cheshire	1	30	30	0	0	30
	Grtr Manchester	40	7256	6307	482	467	7846
	Lancashire	3	270	197	21	50	443
	Merseyside	8	1728	1156	186	386	1773
YORKSHIRE & HUMBERSIDE	Humberside	3	371	228	57	86	349
	North Yorkshire	2	100	40	24	36	74
	South Yorkshire	2	301	133	69	99	302
	West Yorkshire	9	3235	2291	303	641	3432
NORTH	Durham	1	27	10	6	11	30
	Tyne & Wear	4	783	561	77	145	1038
SCOTLAND		11	1952	1288	264	400	2341
WALES		6	561	402	50	109	653
NORTHERN IRELAND		1	128	90	13	25	129
TOTAL		362	87790	74843	7871	5076	93587

Appendix 2: Membership by London Borough

BOROUGH	Congrs	2001				1995
		Total	H/hld	Males	Females	Total
Barnet	48	17367	13665	1181	2521	17066
Brent	9	2880	1541	334	1005	3581
Bromley	1	300	134	44	122	280
Camden	6	2075	1019	386	670	2234
City of London	1	Included with Westminster				
Croydon	1	83	83	0	0	84
Ealing	2	394	309	33	52	460
Enfield	4	2083	1385	195	503	2981
Greenwich	Syn. closed					116
Hackney	56	6527	5129	488	910	7527
Hammersmith	1	103	32	14	57	223
Haringey	5	756	358	118	280	930
Harrow	5	3428	2508	252	668	3663
Havering	2	220	126	35	59	257
Hillingdon	4	1401	1283	50	68	1141
Hounslow	1	58	30	9	19	74
Kensington & Chelsea	4	538	433	41	64	540
Kingston upon Thames	2	555	351	68	136	569
Lambeth	2	600	476	52	72	626
Lewisham	1	268	199	51	188	348
Merton	2	542	530	1	11	562
Newham	1	203	80	29	84	294
Redbridge	13	5315	3971	407	937	5295
Richmond upon Thames	1	145	84	23	38	170
Sutton	1	222	222	0	0	2273
Tower Hamlets	5	1638	1008	210	420	2319
Waltham Forest	3	879	722	43	114	980
Wandsworth	0	0	0	0	0	99
Westminster	11	9255	6433	1155	1667	8813
Total	192	57835	42011	5173	10651	61505

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