ENUMERATING BRITAIN'S JEWISH POPULATION: REASSESSING THE 2001 CENSUS IN THE CONTEXT OF ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF INDIRECT ESTIMATES

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ABSTRACT

The 2001 census count of Britain's Jewish population is placed in the context of over a century of work estimating this group's size. It is argued that the published census figure of 267,000 was surprisingly low given the long term trend indicated by this work. Therefore, other data from both the 2001 census and appropriate communal sources are used to derive an adjusted figure of about 301,000. It is argued that this is a more accurate representation of the size of Britain's Jewish population in 2001. The implications of this figure are that the demographic decline, charted in Britain since the 1960s, appears to have abated with the most likely underlying cause being the rapid demographic growth exhibited by Britain's haredi (strictly Orthodox) population since the 1970s.

INTRODUCTION

Demographers first attempted to scientifically derive estimates of the size of Britain's Jewish population in the 1890s by means of complex 'indirect' methods because 'direct' census data were unavailable. Indeed, more or less every paper published on the topic since then justified the need for such indirect approaches on this basis (Jacobs, 1891; Trachtenberg, 1933:87; Prais & Schmool 1968:5; Haberman et al., 1983:294). However, in 2001 the British census finally included a question on religion which enabled the Jewish population size to be measured directly for the very first time[1]. This long-anticipated event

produced a Jewish population count that was surprisingly small given previous estimates. It was also statistically problematic since it was based on the only voluntary question in the census. Indeed, it was clear that the census count was, in all likelihood, an understatement (Graham & Waterman, 2005, 2007; Voas, 2007).

That said the 2001 census still proved to be a remarkable resource for the Jewish population, providing it with highly detailed and robust Jewish demographic, geographic, socio-economic and health information (Graham et al., 2007). The 2001 census was therefore bittersweet and ironic from the Jewish demographic point of view. On the one hand it provided a flood of new data but on the other it produced a suspiciously small population estimate. To date there has been no attempt to reconcile the raw census figure empirically with other indicators of the size of Britain's Jewish population, which in turn, has prevented demographers from assessing the census results in the context of a century or more of indirect population estimates.

This is important because an accurate understanding of the size of the Jewish population is necessary for optimising the distribution of scarce communal resources. Services such as care for the elderly and disadvantaged, Jewish education and security all require an accurate understanding of the functional size of the community. In addition, there is the matter of historical record; we only know how the size of the Jewish population has changed over time because of the efforts of dedicated scholars over the course of the twentieth century to enumerate it. And their data can also be used to try and understand how the population may change in the future.

There is of course no 'true' Jewish population size. Like any such indicator, especially those relating to groups primarily defined by their identity, population totals are at best 'synthetic indicators' which reflect the 'permanently provisional' character of Jewish population estimates (DellaPergola, 2002, 2005:86,90). This is because the fluid nature of identity means that boundaries between groups are, in reality, blurred (Alba, 2005). As a result, *all* estimates are necessarily based on various assumptions and caveats depending on the parameters being set by the demographer. This paper aims to derive a figure most likely to encapsulate the 'functionally Jewish' population in Britain in 2001. In other words, to produce an estimate of the total number of people who were likely to have considered themselves Jewish *in any way*. All the assumptions and caveats used in deriving this figure are described here in detail.

100 YEARS OF INDIRECT ENUMERATION OF BRITAIN'S JEWISH POPULATION

Since the 'pioneering' efforts of Joseph Jacobs in 1891 and Simon Rosenbaum in 1905 (Schmool, 1996:ix–x; Rosenbaum, 1905) demographers

have relied on what has become known as 'the death rates method' for accurately estimating the size of the Jewish population in Britain. In an early justification for this approach Rosenbaum (1905:527) noted, over one hundred years ago, that 'for statistical purposes [a Jew] is best defined as one who when he dies is buried in a Jewish cemetery.' This assumption enabled him to derive a population figure by comparing cohort-specific mortality statistics (gathered from the various burial societies, cemeteries and crematoria concerned with the internment of Jews) with those of the general population. By working backwards, a reasonable estimate of the Jewish population could then be derived.[2] Table 1 summarises the majority of estimates using this approach published over the last 100 years up until the final effort before the 2001 census. Although each study built on and refined earlier approaches, all the authors of these works acknowledge that the figures are, necessarily, 'rough estimates' of the population size. As Haberman & Schmool (1995:559) have noted, '[p]revious estimates never claimed to cover everyone who might, when asked, identify as a Jew and indeed noted this omission.'[3]

Table 1
Key estimates of the size of the Jewish population in Britain and London since 1882

| Period | 'Best estimates' of the Jewish population (rounded to nearest 1,000) | | Source |
	Britain	London	
1882	60,000	46,000	Lipman, 1954:65; Jacobs (1891:11)
1903	240,000	144,000	Rosenbaum (1905:541,554)
1918	300,000*	-	Waterman & Kosmin (1986:21)
1921	300,000*	-	Salaman (1921)
1929	-	212,000	Trachtenberg (1933:96)
1929-33	-	234,000	Kantorowitsch (1936:377-78)
1938[a]	330,000*	183,000*	Salomon (1938:41-42)
1960-65	410,000	280,000	Prais & Schmool (1968:9,19)
1977-79	336,000	-	Haberman, Kosmin & Levy (1983:307)
1980-83[b]	330,000*	-	Waterman & Kosmin (1986:21)
1984-88	308,000	-	Haberman & Schmool (1995:556)
1989-93	295,500[c]	-	Schmool & Cohen (1998:5)

NOTES
* These figures were not published with accompanying explanations as to how they were derived.
a) Sidney Salomon's (1938:41-42) estimate of 330,000 for Britain and 183,000 for London was 'complied by estimating the number of births, marriages and deaths'. The London figure is noticeably out of step with earlier and later estimates. b) Waterman & Kosmin's (1986:21) national figure is sourced to 'Research Unit statistics'. c) This figure was published without accompanying derivation details, but is based on the death rates method (M Schmool, personal communication, 26 June 2009).

Charting demographic change in this way has made it possible to tell the fascinating story of this population's evolution and help explain how the current period relates to the past. For example, Table 1 shows the considerable rise in numbers at the dawn of the 20th century due to immigration from Eastern Europe, as well as a second immigrant influx prior to the Second World War, itself followed by a post-war baby-boom that led to the population peaking in size in the 1950s and early 1960s (Lipman, 1990). By this time, however, changing social norms leading to decreased fertility and late marriage, as well as assimilation, were beginning to impact on the population, precipitating a decline of about 1% per year for much of the second half of the twentieth century (Kosmin & Levy, 1985). But as this paper highlights, that demographic contraction appears to have abated and the population has arguably 'flattened out'. The reasons for this about-turn are discussed in the second half of the paper.

The majority of the figures presented in Table 1 are based on published accounts of their derivation. This is because only by understanding the assumptions and caveats on which figures are based can valid judgements be made about their merits. This also means that some figures have not been included precisely because of the assumptions upon which they are based. By far the most significant omission from Table 1 is the total of 450,000 presented by Hannah Neustatter[4] in 1955 (p73–76) which includes 'a certain number of Jews who fall within our definition [but] are untraceable. We estimate this section at 15 per cent.' Since no explanation is provided by Neustatter as to why this 'untraceable' group amounted to 15% or, indeed, how knowledge of their existence existed at all, the figure is generally regarded as unreliable by modern scholars (see for example Schmool, 1996:xii). Nevertheless, this unsubstantiated figure was to reappear in the *Jewish Year Book* annually for a further 25 years[5] and, as a result, has been widely quoted.

By the mid-1990s, it was becoming clear that even the more statistically robust figures based on the death rates method were looking increasingly problematic and likely to be undercounting the Jewish population. For example, Haberman & Schmool concluded that because of considerable social change in the Jewish community it had become appropriate 'to question the long-standing working assumption of the death-rates [sic] method…' (1995:559). They noted that changing lifestyles and patterns of Jewish affiliation, especially among younger generations, were resulting in Jews being increasingly less likely to choose a Jewish burial or cremation. 'These combined trends indicate that direct methods of investigation [i.e. a census] and estimation are required to provide a more accurate picture'. (ibid:560)

It was therefore timely that six years later the 2001 censuses of England and Wales included a religion question for the first time and held out the promise that at long last, a straightforward solution to a

century of complex, indirect Jewish population estimation had come to an end. The census was much more than simply a new method of enumeration; it was after all counting a very different Jewish population to the one encapsulated by the death rates method (Schmool, 1995:x). Whereas the death rates method only included Jews who, in some small way, identified with the community at the end of their lives, the census recorded anyone who, when asked on 29th April 2001 what their religion was, stated 'Jewish'. With no other 'entry requirements' this self-defined population had the potential to be larger than the one enumerated by the more restrictive death rates approach.

The complex issues surrounding the way in which censuses address subjective topics such as identity have led to considerable academic debate and caused many to question the value of such data[6]. It is therefore important to understand *who* was being counted in the 2001 census. The fact that 360,000 people reported 'Jedi' in the religion question suggests that not everyone took it seriously or felt that its inclusion was unacceptable. No doubt at least some of those 'Jedis' were synagogue members who simply objected to the census asking them about their religious identity. It is impossible to know. The census is also clearly *not* measuring a *halachically* Jewish population, i.e. Jews as defined by Orthodox Jewish law[7]. As far as the 2001 census was concerned, if a person considered him or herself to be Jewish, for whatever reason, and chose to tick the Jewish box, then he or she was counted as 'Jewish'. But it should also be noted that in the ten years that have passed since the 2001 census, no evidence has come to light of mass fraud or other sabotage that might have artificially *inflated* the size of the Jewish population. Therefore, the following reassessment of the 2001 census total for Jews in Britain solely addresses the issue of undercount.

DERIVING AN ESTIMATE OF BRITAIN'S JEWISH POPULATION IN 2001

When the first ever sets of census data on religion were published in September 2003, they showed that the number of people in Britain who, in 2001, had ticked 'Jewish' in response to the religion question, was 266,740 (Table 2). However, this figure was somewhat lower than what would have been expected given the arguably broad definition used by the census and the trend of a century of indirect estimates (Table 1). Schmool & Cohen (1998:5) had used the death rates method to estimate the size of the Jewish population in 1991 deriving a figure of 295,500 persons. Although this total was achieved using indirect methods, the suggestion that the Jewish population had contracted by almost 10% in ten years was suspicious for several reasons. First, as Haberman & Schmool (1995) had noted the 1991 figure was in all likelihood itself an understatement. Second, there was no empirical evidence to suggest

that such a dramatic decline in the size of the Jewish population had occurred due to emigration, assimilation or secularisation in the period. Third, the inclusion of a census question was contentious because many people felt it represented an invasion of privacy and would therefore be deterred from responding, thereby producing an underestimate (Graham and Waterman, 2005). Fourth, being voluntary, the census question produced a higher than average non-response among the general population[8] and it is reasonable to assume that this trend was mirrored among Jews. Fifth, a number of people who described themselves as Jewish *elsewhere* on the census form (such as in the census's questions on ethnicity) were not included in the 'religion' figure. Sixth, non-response to the religion question in wards noted as having particularly sizable *haredi*[9] populations was seen to be especially high (Graham and Waterman, 2005:98–99).

Table 2
Raw 2001 census counts for UK Jewish populations

Country	Census count
England and Wales: Jewish by religion	259,927
Scotland: Current religion Jewish*	6,448
Northern Ireland: Current religion Jewish*	365
Total UK	266,740

NOTES
* Refers to all those responding Jewish to a question on *current* religion or 'religious affiliation'
Source: Graham et al., 2007:110

Given the evidence of an especially high haredi undercount relative to the rest of the Jewish population (Graham & Waterman, 2005) it is necessary to establish how many haredim were enumerated within the 266,740 census figure and separate out the haredi and non-haredi totals. The difficulty with this is that census data are not available based on Jewish denomination or synagogue affiliation. A second problem relates to there being no clearly defined boundaries separating haredi Jews from other Jews. According to Deutsch (2009:4 note 2) the most common aspect of haredi Judaism that unites haredi Jews but distinguishes them from other Jews is 'their rejection of the modern idea that the new is better.' (see also Valins, 2003a:159). One visible consequence of this is a distinctive dress code but, in reality, it is very difficult, if not impossible, to operationalize the term 'haredi'. And whilst in most cases the differences will be clear enough (in terms of demography, schooling, Jewish practices, as well as appearance), there are inevitably instances where the boundaries between haredim and other orthodox Jews are blurred.

That said, several surveys and independent studies have shown that haredim tend to live in neighbourhoods with very high Jewish population densities, in a small number of well-defined locales, spatially separated from the majority Jewish population (Gonen, 2005, 2006; Holman & Holman, 2002, 2003; Valins, 2003a). Vulkan & Graham (2008) have shown that haredi Jews in Britain live in four main clusters, all of which are in England. Of these, three consist of highly dense Jewish populations that are more or less entirely haredi and are spatially distinct from other Jewish populations. The largest concentration is 'Stamford Hill' in North London, located in the north of the London Borough of Hackney and extending into the south of the contiguous London Borough of Haringey. The second largest is 'Broughton Park' in Manchester incorporating the north-east of the City of Salford and contiguous areas in the Metropolitan Borough of Bury. The third cluster is 'Gateshead' in Tyne and Wear. Although there are certainly some non-haredi Jews living in each of these three clusters, there is little evidence to suggest that the numbers are significant based on an assessment of synagogue membership data for non-haredi communities in these areas (Graham & Vulkan, 2010). For the purposes of this analysis these three clusters are therefore treated as being 100% haredi. Table 3 lists all the wards and Jewish census counts in these 'haredi-only' clusters, and shows that 15,775 (haredi) Jews were enumerated there in 2001. Each ward also exhibits exceptionally high proportions of young people suggesting very high birth-rates, another indication that these are predominantly haredi populations.

The fourth haredi cluster differs from the other three in that it is less densely populated and 'overlaps' other (non-haredi) Jewish communities. Located in North-west London in the south of the London Borough of Barnet, it therefore requires different statistical treatment and necessitates the use of secondary data sources. Since synagogue membership data are insufficient due to the informal nature of synagogue membership among haredim, an alternative source of data is required. Perhaps the most important source is the local address and telephone directories that each haredi community provides for its residents. These '*Shomer Shabbos*' directories are published irregularly but contain contact details of the majority of families in each *kehilla* (haredi community). Households included in the directories are gathered by word of mouth and/or a form in the directory which can be sent to the editors informing them about changes of residence. Such surveillance is possible in these very tight-knit communities (Deutsch, 2009). In this way directory staff are able to keep track fairly well of families moving into and out of the areas. New families are contacted in order to ask their permission to include them in the directory and although some refuse, the majority do not. However, the directories only include the details of those who have chosen to be included and it is not possible to determine definitely how comprehensive each directory is.

Table 3

Wards identified as being predominantly haredi in the 2001 census

(1) Haredi cluster	(2) Ward name	(3) Number Jewish in the census	(4) % of ward aged under 18 (national Jewish average = 19.3%)
Stamford Hill	Springfield	2,552	49.1
	New River	2,346	44.5
	Lordship	1,949	42.9
	Cazenove	1,390	43.9
	Seven Sisters	1,351	43.9
Broughton Park	Kersal	4,025	39.8
	Broughton	671	55.0
Gateshead	Bensham	1,177	51.6
	Bede	107	67.3
	Saltwell	207	60.9
Total		15,775	–

Source: ONS 2001 Census Table S149 *Standard Table on Sex and Age by Religion*, England and Wales

The directories therefore offer an important secondary source of data on haredi numbers and conveniently provide a functional definition of 'haredi'. In North-west London the directory is called *North West Connection*. The 2006 edition listed 1,631 haredi households in the area. Using average household size data derived from the census and survey data Vulkan & Graham (2008:15) suggest that there were therefore between 4,012 and 6,769 haredi Jews in north-west London in 2006. They also show clear evidence that the haredi community in general has been growing at a remarkable rate of about 4% per year since the early 1990s (ibid:16). Therefore, depreciating the midpoint of these two figures (5,391) by 4% per year over five years (i.e. to 2001) gives a haredi population size estimate in NW London of 4,431. As Step 1 shows, subtracting these two haredi population totals from the raw census count suggests that 245,401 non-haredi Jews were enumerated in the 2001 census.

Step 1 Subtracting haredim from the raw census count

Raw 2001 census count of Britain's Jewish population	266,740
Total Jewish population in 'haredi wards'	15,775 −
Estimate of enumerated haredi population in NW London	4,431 −
First estimate for the non-haredi Jewish population enumerated in 2001 census	246,534 =

Uniquely, because of its sensitive nature, the religion question was voluntary in the 2001 census. It was therefore associated with a higher than average level of non-response.[10] In England and Wales, 7.71%[11] of the general population did not answer the religion question. The question then arises as to what extent it can be assumed that non-haredi Jews exhibit the same non-response propensity? An initial answer to this question is that because of a relatively recent history of oppression by foreign governments Jews might have been more hesitant than most about answering the census's religion question. However, as the census itself showed, the majority (83%) of Jews were born in Britain. Further, survey data from the Institute for Jewish Policy Research also suggest that Jewish non-response probably mirrored the general population. Two communal surveys asked non-haredi Jewish respondents to report how they had answered the census question. In London in 2002 it was found that 7.8% of respondents (N=2,936) reported that they had either chosen not to answer the religion question or 'did not fill in a census form'.[12] The equivalent proportion for Leeds was 8.6% (N=1,417). Since these results are similar to the 7.7% non-response among the general population this can be used to adjust the non-haredi total as shown in Step 2 giving an adjusted figure of 267,130.

Step 2 Adjusting for non-response among non-haredi Jews in the census

Non-haredi Jewish population enumerated in 2001 census	246,534 /
Accounts for 7.71% non-response to the religion question	0.9229
Second estimate for the non-haredi Jewish population enumerated in 2001 census	= 267,130

It should be noted that there is an argument suggesting the census figure should also be adjusted to account for Jews who chose to respond 'No Religion' to the religion question. This is based on the assumption that there are multiple dimensions to Jewish identity beyond religion (Lazar et al., 2002; Miller, 1994). For example, people who see their Jewish identity in solely cultural or ethnic terms might not have considered their Jewish identity to be 'religious' as such, and may have responded 'No religion'. Whilst it is likely that such a scenario existed for some people it is more difficult to argue that Jews in general would have responded 'No Religion' to a question on religious identity at the same rate as the general population. Unlike the non-response group, people ticking 'No Religion' are making a clear statement about their identity – they do not consider themselves to be Jewish (at least by religion). In addition, it is not possible to assess accurately how many people of 'No Religion' might have answered Jewish had the question referred to broader aspects of Jewish identity. Thus, in the absence of a satisfactory alternative, Jews

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who responded No Religion and did not respond Jewish anywhere else in the census, are not included in this adjustment.

On the other hand, two other groups of Jews appear clearly in the census but not within the confines of the religion question. The first group were in England and Wales and were all those who described themselves as 'Jewish' using the write-in option in the census's question on ethnicity and did *not* report being Jewish in the religion question. This conscious decision to report Jewish was in spite of the 'ethnicity' question listing a set of categories conflating notions of race, skin colour and nationality ('Black', 'White', 'Chinese', Indian', 'Pakistani' etc.). So many different facets of identity were included in this question that it was arguably ambiguous and confusing (Brimicombe, 2007:889; Simpson, 2004:662–63).

The second group of Jews identified in the census, but not recorded in the *current* religion data, appear in the Scottish census. In Scotland the religion question was presented in two parts; a question about current religion was followed by a question about religion of upbringing. In addition, the question wording also differed; rather than the 'What is your religion' wording presented in England and Wales, Scots were presented with 'What religion, religious denomination or body do you belong to?', i.e. the Scottish wording was more specifically anchored in notions of affiliation than the wording in England and Wales. Arguably, those who said they had a Jewish upbringing but did not respond to the current religion question should also be included as 'ethnic Jews'. Therefore, as Table 4 shows, 4,926 Jews were enumerated in the 2001 census in addition to 'Jews by religion'. It can be debated as to whether the 1,167 'ethnic Jews' who reported a current non-Jewish religion in 2001 should be included in the Jewish population total, but since they do appear in the census as self-identifying Jews *in any way* (i.e. of mixed identity) they are included in the adjustment. This produces a census total of 272,056 for the non-haredi Jewish population (Step 3).

Table 4
Total number of 'Jews by ethnicity' (England and Wales) and 'Jews by upbringing-only' (Scotland) enumerated in the 2001 census

Country	Category	Count
England & Wales	Jewish by ethnicity with no religion or non-response	2,594
	Jewish by ethnicity with non-Jewish religion	547
Scotland	Upbringing Jewish & current: no religion	774
	Upbringing Jewish & current: religion not stated	391
	Upbringing Jewish & current: non-Jewish religion	620
Total		4,926

Source: Graham & Waterman, 2007

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Step 3 Adding in enumerated 'ethnic' Jews

Estimated size of non-haredi 'Jewish by religion' population enumerated in the census	267,130
Size of 'Jewish by ethnicity' population enumerated in the census	4,926 +
Third estimate for the **non-haredi** Jewish population enumerated in 2001 census	272,056 =

Finally it is necessary to add back in an adjusted total which accounts for the removal of the census-enumerated haredi population at Step 1. There are various ways in which this can be done but all require estimates to be made of the 'true' size of Britain's haredi population in 2001. One possibility is simply to rely on the level of haredi non-response reported by Graham & Waterman (2005:99), which showed that in Stamford Hill, non-response to the religion question was 16.1% compared with 7.71% in general. In theory this proportion could be used to adjust the entire haredi census count upwards. The estimated number of haredim enumerated in the census (20,206 established in Step 1) would be adjusted to 25,433 on this basis. Although such an adjustment may be sufficient, there is the possibility that many haredi families simply ran out of space on the main household form and did not apply for additional forms or, as some have speculated, they did not complete a census form at all (though this remains pure conjecture). If so, then 16.1% would be an underestimate of the non-response levels among haredim and should not be used to adjust the census figure.

It is therefore necessary to establish the size of the population by indirect means and once again this can be done using the address and telephone directories maintained by the haredi communities themselves. Table 5 provides details of all the haredi household counts from the three directories covering Stamford Hill, Broughton Park and Gateshead (see column 3). To estimate the population size it is necessary to establish the average household size in each of the clusters. A variety of data sources are available including the 2001 census itself but surveys suggest that these figures understate average household size. For example, the census reported that the average size of Jewish households in New River ward in Stamford Hill was 3.21 persons per household (pph),[13] whereas Holman & Holman (2002) have estimated the Stamford Hill figure to be 5.9pph and their (unpublished) study of Broughton Park reveals an average of 6.0pph (Holman & Holman, 2003).

As column 5 in Table 5 shows, this produces three population estimates for the three clusters however, they do not relate to 2001. Therefore, each figure in column 5 has been depreciated by 4% per year (column

Table 5

Estimated size of haredi population clusters in Stamford Hill,
Broughton Park and Gateshead

(1) Cluster	(2) Year directory published	(3) Total number of households counted in directory	(4) Average household size based on survey data	(5) Estimated size of population at year of publication	(6) Depreciating estimated population sizes to 2001
Stamford Hill	2007	3,174[a]	5.9[d]	18,727	14,800
Broughton Park	2006	1,550[b]	6.0[e]	9,300	7,644
Gateshead[f]	2008	366[c]	6.0[e]	2,196	1,669

NOTES

Adapted from Vulkan & Graham, 2008:13

a) Number of households in *The North London Shomer Shabbos Telephone & Business Directory* 2007; b) Number of households in *North Manchester Connections* 2006; c) Number of households in *Our Kehillah Directory* 2008; d) Holman & Holman, 2002; e) Holman & Holman, 2003 (assumes Gateshead is directly comparable); f) It should be noted that these data do not account for the pupils studying at religious seminaries and *yeshivot* in Gateshead.[14]

6) based on Vulkan & Graham's (2008:13) calculation of haredi growth rates. By adding in the figure already calculated for the cluster in north-west London (Step 1), an estimate of 28,544 people is derived for the total haredi population in Britain in 2001. This figure enables an estimate to be made of the total extent of the haredi non-response to the religion question. Given that 20,206 haredim are estimated to have been enumerated in the 2001 census (Step 1) total haredi non-response was therefore about 29.2%.

This is the final adjustment to be made to the raw census count and the adjusted size of Britain's Jewish population in 2001 can now be estimated. Adding the estimated haredi totals for 2001 to the estimate for the non-haredi Jewish population (Step 3) produces a total Jewish population estimate of 300,600 people (Step 4). This figure represents an

Step 4 Adding in haredi Jews

Estimate of population including 'ethnic-only Jews' excluding haredim	272,056
Estimate of haredi population in Stamford Hill	14,800 +
Estimate of haredi population in Broughton Park	7,644 +
Estimate of haredi population in Gateshead	1,669 +
Estimate of haredi population in NW London	4,431 +
Estimated total Jewish population in Britain in 2001	300,600 =

estimate of the total number of Jews in Britain in 2001, after adjusting for non-response among mainstream Jews, 'ethnic' Jewish census responses and haredi non-response. Thus, the adjustment suggests the raw census total represented an undercount of 12.7% nationally. The figure 300,600 reflects the number of Jews who are likely to have described themselves as Jewish in any way in 2001. Of course, since this is an estimate, it contains a margin of error of perhaps ±3%, but this cannot be ascertained with statistical certainty. Even so, 300,600 represents a more accurate reflection of the 'true' size of the Britain's Jewish population in 2001 than the census figure of 266,740.

PLACING THE ADJUSTED POPULATION ESTIMATE IN CONTEXT

Whilst 300,600 is necessarily an estimate, it is based on empirical evidence and reasoned argument. Clearly, a large number of alternative population totals could also have been derived that would carry similar weight. Nevertheless, a figure needs to be reached if the 2001 census is to be assessed in the context of 100 years of Jewish population estimation. Figure 1 places this estimate in that context and in doing so makes it immediately apparent that the Jewish population decline, which
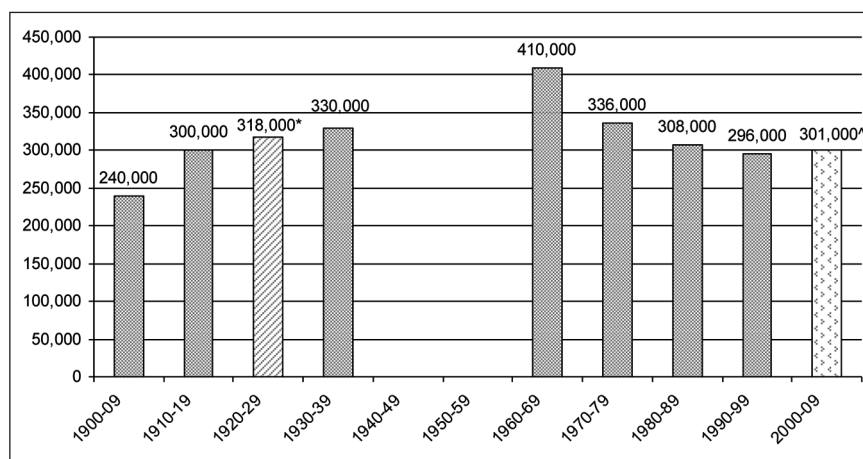

Figure 1
Jewish population change in Britain from 1900 including the adjusted 2001 census figure*

NOTES
* See Table 1 for sources. Note the bar for the 1920s is inferred using Trachtenberg's (1933:96) London estimate of 212,000 assuming that the ratio of Jews in London relative to the rest of Britain has always been about two thirds.
^ Figure derived here from the 2001 Census count of 266,740.

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commenced around the late 1950s and early 1960s, appears to have
flattened out. This is surprising given the fears raised during the 1990s
that Diaspora Jews were 'vanishing' due to low Jewish birth rates and
assimilation (see for example Wasserstein, 1996; Sacks, 1995; Dershowitz,
1997; DellaPergola, 2003).

What might account for the bucking of the downward trend of the
1960s and 1970s? In the absence of evidence for significant Jewish immi-
gration, one possibility is that the decline was 'softened' by increased
longevity, however, it is difficult to prove this empirically and whilst
it may be true the impact would only be temporary as a new equilib-
rium was reached and the pattern of decline continued. An alternative
argument is that the considerable expansion of Jewish day schooling
in Britain over the last 20 years (Valins et al, 2001; JLC, 2008) has
led directly to a demographic revival.[15] However the impact of Jewish
schooling on 'Jewish continuity' is by no means clear-cut and it has
been argued that such an assumption is flawed once Jewish upbringing
is controlled for (Short, 2005; Miller, 2003). A clearer and far more
convincing explanation for the flattening out of the Jewish population
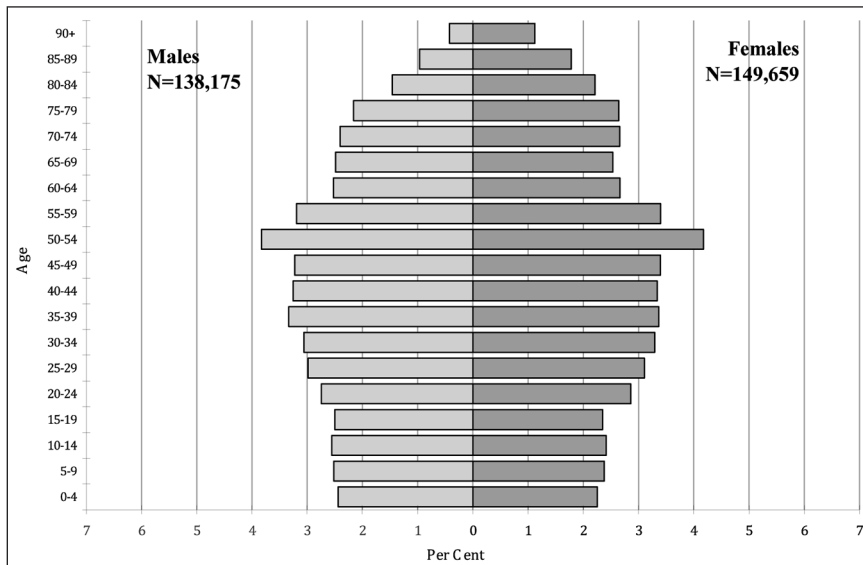curve is haredi population growth. As noted above, it has been estimated

Figure 2
Population pyramid showing the total adjusted non-haredi Jewish
population in 2001, England and Wales, by gender, (bars sum to 100%)*

NOTES
* This figure does not include data on Scotland, Northern Ireland, or 'ethnic' Jews
Source: 2001 Census ONS data table S149

that the haredi community has been growing at about 4% per year since the early 1990s (Vulkan & Graham, 2008). However, the above calculations suggest that in 2001, haredim only constituted about 9.5% of the national Jewish population in Britain. Could such a relatively small sub-group reverse an entire population trend?

The key to understanding the importance of haredi growth is found not in the overall haredi population proportion but the proportions at younger age cohorts. As was noted in column 4 of Table 3 haredi communities exhibit considerably younger population structures than other Jewish groups (see also Graham et al, 2007). Indeed, Hart et al. (2007:145) estimated that 'Strictly Orthodox' Jews accounted for 25% of the total Jewish school-age population in the academic year 2003/4 (see also Valins, 2003b:159). However, since these figures only relate to the school-aged population, it is instructive to see whether the census might shed a comprehensive light on this issue.

Figures 2 and 3 show, respectively, the overall shape of the non-haredi Jewish population and the haredi population using 2001 census data for Jews in England and Wales.[16] The percentage scales of each graph are the same but the (adjusted) size of each population are obviously
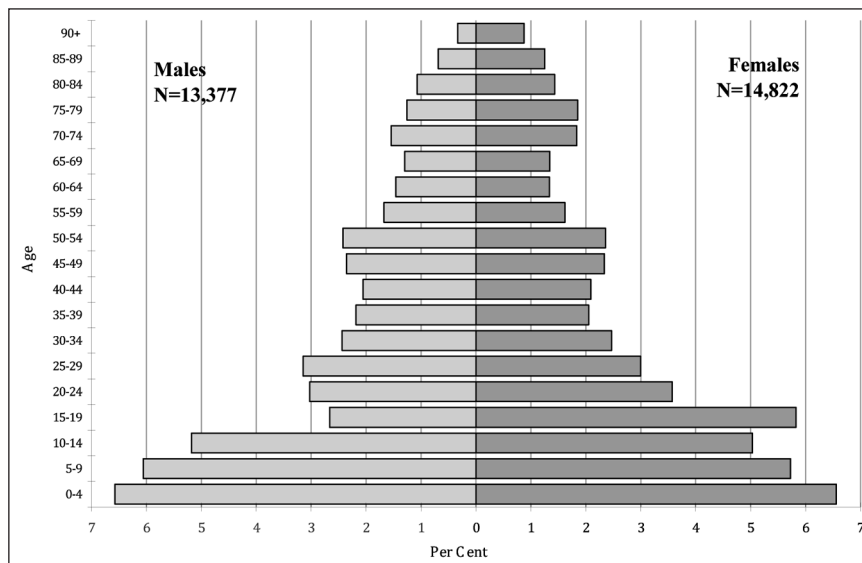

Figure 3

Population pyramid showing the total adjusted haredi population in 2001, England and Wales, by gender, (bars sum to 100%)*

NOTES

* This figure does not include data on Scotland or Northern Ireland

Source: 2001 Census ONS data table S149 and haredi community directories

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different. For example, Figure 2 shows that the non-haredi female Jewish population aged 0–4 amounted to 2.25% of the total non-haredi population in 2001. This equated with 5,583 people however, the equivalent proportion in Figure 3 of 6.56% equates to only 1,850 people. The pyramids provide a useful way of examining the internal structure of each population so for example, the slight bulge in the 50–54 cohorts of both figures represents the baby-boom and the 'off-centred' 15–19 cohort in Figure 3 is likely to be the result of the outflow of male haredi teenagers to yeshivas abroad and the inflow of foreign female haredi teenagers to seminaries in Gateshead.

It is also clear that the shape of each figure differs dramatically. A far higher proportion of the haredi population is young whereas the reverse is true for the non-haredi population. In order to compare these populations directly Figure 4 shows the proportionate contribution haredim made to each cohort of the total Jewish population in 2001. The graph shows that the haredi proportion increases dramatically; from about 5% for most cohorts above the age of 40 to 23.1% for the 0–4 cohort. In other words, by 2001 almost a quarter of all Jewish children born in Britain was haredi. By contrast haredim contribute just 9.5% of the total Jewish population. Figure 4 also suggests that the haredi population began its demographic 'take off' during the 1970s and was increasing its proportion of the Jewish birth cohort by 2.1 percentage points every five years to the end of the century. It remains to be seen if this trend has continued through to the 2011 census which was being conducted at the time of writing.
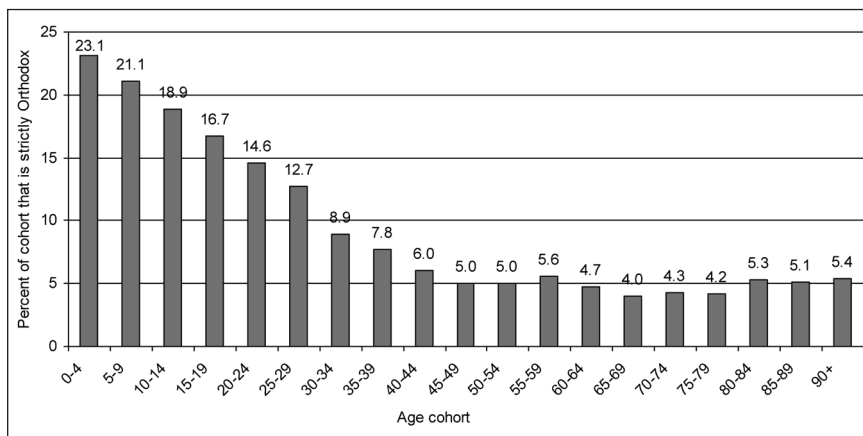

Figure 4
Estimated proportion of each age cohort that was haredi in 2001

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CONCLUSION

This paper estimates that Britain's Jewish population numbered about 301,000 in 2001 and not 267,000 as reported by the national census. By implication, the census therefore undercounted this group by 12.7%. Although this adjusted figure is not definitive—no population figure is unchallengeable—it has been derived using a variety of empirical reference points and incorporates a transparent and repeatable approach. Implicit in this revision is the assumption that the census question on religion, being voluntary, meant a certain level of non-response occurred among the Jewish population and that this needed to be taken into account. It also recognised that the census recorded a small number of people as being Jewish outside the confines of the religion question and these 'Jews by ethnicity' were also adjusted for. Finally, it was noted that the haredi population was a special case which needed to be treated separately since haredi non-response was far higher (perhaps as high as 29.2%) than in the rest of the Jewish population (estimated to be 7.7%).

By deriving an adjusted population figure of 301,000 it is possible more accurately to contextualize the 2001 census after 100 years of indirect estimates of Britain's Jewish population. In doing so, it can be seen that the growth and decline of the size of the population over the course of the twentieth century has, as a result of factors such as immigration, natural growth/decline, and assimilation, levelled off. In other words, the Jewish population appears to have turned a demographic corner, ameliorating a downward slide that began in the 1960s and continued into the 1990s. The 2001 census data together with other statistical evidence suggest that this is most likely due to a truly remarkable population explosion within the haredi community over the course of the final three decades of the twentieth century. This is perhaps best demonstrated by the estimate that although haredim made up about 9.5% of the approximately 301,000 Jews in Britain in 2001, at the very youngest cohorts the proportion exceeded 23%.

At the time of writing the 2011 census had only just taken place so it remained to be seen if these trends will be continued into the 21st century. Fortunately, the question wording used in 2001, which asked 'What is your religion?', was repeated in 2011. Although there were a couple of minor differences in the question format (i.e., the 2001 category 'None' became 'No religion' in 2011 and this census also omitted the 2001 instruction to 'Tick one box only') these were unlikely to change the way most Jews chose to respond to the religion question thus making direct comparisons possible. It should also be noted that a concerted effort was made within the haredi community to encourage a more complete response, for example, adverts appeared in the Jewish press publicising single-sex drop-in sessions run by the community in association with the England and Wales Office of National Statistics[17].

Therefore, whether or not the trend reversal continues, it will be possible, for the first time, directly to examine change in the Jewish population from one decade to the next. As this paper demonstrates, this too is likely to be a complex exercise. Finally, it is unfortunate to note that 2011 may also mark the last time such a comparison will be possible since the future of the census itself is threatened in Britain (Martin, 2006; Hope, 2010). If the census is eventually abandoned then demographers of the future will have to either return to the death rates method of population estimation or develop new, indirect enumeration techniques in order to continue the work of 100 years of Jewish population estimation in Britain.

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NOTES

[1] There are two minor exceptions. First, a religion question has always been asked in Northern Ireland's census, and second, in 1851 a census of Religious Worship took place in England and Wales but this focused on places of worship rather than worshippers.

[2] For a full description of this method and the ways in which it has evolved see Haberman & Schmool, 1995; Haberman et al., 1983; and Prais & Schmool, 1968:7–8

[3] See also Prais & Schmool, 1968:7–8.

[4] It is not clear that Neustatter was the originator of the 450,000 figure since she refers in her derivation published in 1955 to the *Jewish Year Book* of 1952 (Neustatter:58) as the original source.

[5] 450,000 appears in the 1976 edition of the *Jewish Year Book* (p185) but by 1978 the figure is 410,000 (p158) although this is also a likely overstatement.

[6] See for example Aspinall (2002, 2003); Brimicombe (2007:891) Goldscheider (2002); Graham & Boyle (2001:390); Kertzer & Arel, (2002:11,35); Simpson (2004); Voas & Bruce (2004); Voas (2007).

[7] Jewish authenticity as defined by (Orthodox) *halacha* states that a person is Jewish either if they have been born to a Jewish woman (who herself is recognised as Jewish by Orthodox criteria) or have converted to Judaism under auspices recognised by Orthodox authorities.

[8] See below

[9] The term 'haredi' (pl. haredim) is used here to refer to orthodox Jews who observe idiosyncratic cultural practices such as dressing in a distinctive way and exhibiting very high birth rates. In this paper, *haredi* (alternate spelling *charedi*) is used synonymously with the terms 'ultra-orthodox' and 'strictly orthodox'. *Haredi* is an umbrella term for a plethora of different Jewish sects. For example, in Britain there is an Ashkenazic group originating from Europe, a Sephardic group originating from Spain and Portugal, and an 'Oriental' group originating from North African and Arab countries. Within the main Ashkenazic group a distinction can be made between *hasidim* and non-*hasidim* or *misnagdim*. Amongst

the *misnagdim* a distinction is often made between "German" and "Lithuanian" customs. The hasidim themselves are comprised of several sub-sects. All these different groups have developed separate liturgies and customs and resulting cultural identities (Coleman, 2006:9; Valins, 2003a:159).

[10] See http://www.statistics.gov.uk/census2001/downloads/ItemnonrespLAD.xls

[11] I.e. 4,010,658 people out of 52,041,916 = 7.71%. (ONS 2001 Census Table KS07). Note this proportion was lower in Scotland (5.49%) however, since Scotland accounts for less than 3% of the national Jewish population, 7.71% is applied across Britain.

[12] Calculations made by the author.

[13] ONS 2001 Census – Table C0645

[14] There are two seminaries (for girls) and three yeshivot (for boys) in Gateshead. A majority of the students are foreign or from London and are not permanently resident in Gateshead. There are no publicly available records indicating the size of this transitory student population. Estimates are not included in these figures.

[15] This argument was recently put forward by Jonathan Sacks: http://www.jpost.com/JewishWorld/JewishNews/Article.aspx?id=226174

[16] Both pyramids were created by identifying 'haredi wards' in the 2001 census. Figure 2 presents the Jewish population minus the haredi wards (with an additional adjustment made for haredim in north-west London) and an overall upwards adjustment of 7.7% to account for the assumed national Jewish non-response. Figure 3 shows the remainder haredi population also adjusted upwards but by 29.2%, the proportion by which this paper estimates the haredi community was undercounted in 2001.

[17] See for example page 6 and 7 of *The Jewish Tribune*, 17th March 2011