

# Jews in Scotland's Censuses

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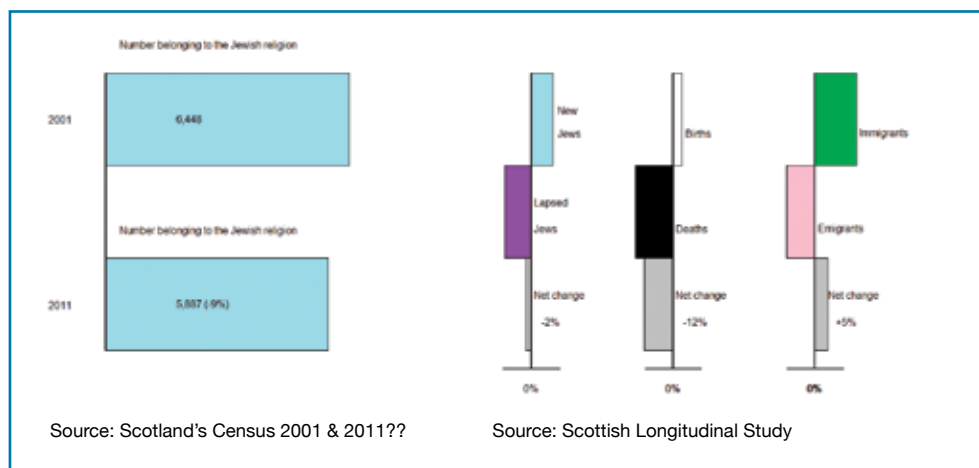
If you were living in Scotland in April 2011 you may remember filling in the Census form and answering the question “What religion, religious denomination, or body do you belong to?”

This was the second time that the Census has asked about religion. At the 2001 Census the same question was included along with an additional question religion “brought up in”. Of course one can argue that this is not the right way to count Jews, Jewish identity is about more than religion. There are good reasons to believe that the Census estimate may be too low and Ephraim Borowski has argued this persuasively in an article on the web site of the Scottish Council of Jewish Communities ([www.scojec.org](http://www.scojec.org)). But the value of Census data is not in absolute numbers, but in looking at trends over time. Between 2001 and 2011 the number of people answering Jewish as the religion they belong to fell by 9%. This compares with a small increase of 1.4% in the numbers of Jews in England.



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The Census data are only available for analysis by staff of the National Records of Scotland (NRS), and the privacy of the records is very strictly protected and will be for 100 years after each Census. But an anonymised sample of approximately 1 in 20 Census records is made available as part of the Scottish Longitudinal Study (SLS) to researchers who must visit a secure setting at the NRS premises and agree to strict rules to preserve the confidentiality of the data. The SLS links individuals over time, between Censuses and also to birth, death and migration information, hospital admissions, cancer registrations and education records. In order to understand the factors that have caused the Jewish numbers to decline I have analysed the SLS data in a joint project with ScoJeC staff (Ephraim Borowski and Fiona Frank) this is a small extract from our preliminary results.



The numbers of Jews can change from 2001 to 2011 because people change the way they answer the question, because those in 2001 are no longer in Scotland in 2011 or because new Jews enter Scotland. We can use the sample from the SLS (320 Jewish SLS members in 2001, falling to 285 in 2011) to calculate the contribution of each of these to the 9% decline. The figure shows the results as the changes due to each of these. Differences to reported Jewish status (mostly to and from no religion) had a relatively small contribution to the decline. The largest contribution to the decline comes from the excess of deaths over births. This is to be expected from the age structure of the 2011 Jewish population: only 10% under 16 compared to 17% in Scotland as a whole and 25% over 65 compared to 17% in all Scotland. But this is compensated by the excess of Jewish immigrants coming to Scotland over those emigrating. Jews have very high proportions of migrants compared to other groups: 12% of Jewish SLS members left Scotland between 2001 and 2011 and 19% were immigrants in 2011, compared to 5% and 7% of all SLS members. We are still wandering Jews.

In an article for the Star in 2005 I speculated on the role of the contribution to the Jewish population of Scotland due to Higher Education students from elsewhere. The SLS data enables us to identify them. Overall they make up 5% of the Jewish population in 2011, and around 3% in 2001. Because almost all are emigrants or immigrants to Scotland they make a substantial contribution to the migration figures. Without the students the net gain from migration would be +3% rather than +5%.

| <b>Council area groups</b>  | <b>2001</b> | <b>2011</b> | <b>% change</b> |
|-----------------------------|-------------|-------------|-----------------|
| East Renfrewshire           | 3128        | 2399        | -23%            |
| Glasgow and surroundings*   | 1455        | 1280        | -8%             |
| Edinburgh Fife and Lothians | 1036        | 1239        | 20%             |
| Elsewhere in Scotland       | 829         | 969         | 9%              |
| <b>All Scotland</b>         | <b>6448</b> | <b>5887</b> | <b>-9%</b>      |

\*Glasgow City, Renfrewshire, Dumbartonshire (E&W), E Ayrshire,S Lanarkshire  
Source <http://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/en/news/articles/release2a.html>

When substantial numbers of Jews came to Scotland in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, their journeys took them from landing at Leith to travel West either to settle there or move on to North America. As we can see from the table, movement between 2001 and 2011 was in the opposite direction, with numbers in the West falling and those in the East and elsewhere in Scotland increasing. To understand what is driving this change we need to consider all the factors described above, as well as possible internal migration. The sample numbers become too small to provide much detail, but some factors can be identified. The reason for the rise in numbers in the Lothian and Fife seems to be largely due to immigration into these areas from outside Scotland. While Jewish death rates are higher in East Renfrewshire than in other areas, losses due to emigration are smaller, so the % net loss of 2001 members from this area is slightly lower than for the Lothians and Fife. The biggest contribution to the decline is the lack of immigration from elsewhere into this area.

Further work remains to be completed on this project. It takes time for all the Census data to be checked, corrected and linked to information from other sources. As well as the SLS members themselves, the SLS holds data on all the family members of each one, their relationships to the SLS member and their answers to the religion question. When this information is available it will enable us to get some insight into topics such as the religious identity of children compared to their parents and the extent of mixed religious partnerships. When all the data are available a more detailed report will be produced.

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