

Scottish Jewry in the 2001 census

Marlena Schmool



An abbreviated version of this paper was published in
Scotland's Jews

(Scottish Council of Jewish Communities, Glasgow, 2008)

http://www.scojec.org/resources/files/scotlands_jews.pdf

Scottish Jewry in the 2001 census

by

Marlena Schmool

Introduction

The decennial census of Scotland in 2001, like that of England and Wales, was the twentieth taken. They constituted a landmark because, as an historical first, they both included questions on religion, albeit voluntary questions. This voluntary status was in itself unique, since the very essence of a census, compared to other surveys, is that all questions are compulsory for everyone. The Scottish census was more sophisticated than that of England and Wales in that it asked not only 'What religion, religious denomination, or body do you belong to'¹ but extended this to enquire into religion of upbringing by asking 'What religion, religious denomination, or body were you brought up in?'

The organised Jewish community debated whether or not to support the questions. The discussion originated with the introduction of an ethnic question in the 1991 census; from 1993 onwards, as the data on ethnicity were published by the British census authorities including the GROS, the importance of the religious factor became increasingly apparent in a population that had become less religiously monolithic.² Some sections of the Jewish community were unhappy about including a religion question on the census, so the cases for and against the question were rehearsed in depth. Supporters pointed to the utility of the data for communal social and educational planning. They exhorted Jews to answer the voluntary question so that the widest possible range of data would eventually be made available. Surveys of Jews in London and Leeds indicated that more than 80 percent of respondents to those studies did in fact choose 'Jewish' as their census response.³

¹ The question in England and Wales was simply 'What is your religion?'

² The crucial question was 'how many of the Asian or Asian British group were Hindu and how many Moslem?'

³ Graham, D., M Schmool and S Waterman (2007) *Jews in Britain: a snapshot from the 2001 Census* (London: JPR)

Response rates and census totals

Methodological tests notwithstanding, no-one could predict how widely the voluntary question would be answered on census night. In the event, in Scotland 5.5 per cent of the total population ignored the question and a further 27.6 per cent responded that they had no religion.⁴ From the viewpoint of communal institutions, the totals for all religious groups were therefore considered to be undercounts. Moreover, general comment and discussion prior to the census had made it clear that there would be Jews who regarded themselves as ethnically but not religiously Jewish.⁵ These people are excluded from a category defined according to religion and, consequently, from these analyses.

The census therefore enumerated only those who were willing to self-identify as Jews by religion, or as having a Jewish upbringing, or both. The number who identified as currently Jewish was 6580⁶ – where 48% were men and 52% women. They accounted for 0.13% of the total population of Scotland and 7% of the non-Christian religious population.⁷ This represented 87% of the 7446 people (0.15% of the census total population) who said they were brought up Jewish. Of these 49% were men and 51% women reinforcing anthropological patterns whereby it is easier and sometimes more accepted for men to move away from their community of origin. Taken together, data on upbringing and current religion show demographic movements. On census night 2001 there were 5661 people who were recorded as currently Jewish and brought up Jewish⁸, there were 787 people who were currently Jewish but brought up in some other or no religion and 1785 people who were brought up Jewish but either indicated that they had no (774) or another (620) religion or did not answer the religion question (391).

⁴ Analysis of Religion in the 2001 Census: Summary Report 2005 (Scottish Executive). Data following are also drawn from General Register Office for Scotland (2003) Census Theme Tables on Current Religion (T25) and Religion of upbringing (T26).

⁵ For full discussion of this issue see *Patterns of Prejudice*, (1998) Vol. 32, No.2, (London: Sage Publications).

⁶ This is the figure in the "Current Religion" table (KS07); however, the "Theme Table on Current Religion" (T25) which cross-tabulates current religion with religion of upbringing uses a figure of 6448.

⁷ 45% of the non-Christian population was Muslim.

⁸ Children's Jewish status will have been given by their parents or guardians.

Ethnicity and birthplace

While the census did not provide a pre-coded box for Jews to tick so as to class themselves ethnically as Jewish, the question on ethnicity did throw some light on the ethnic make-up of Scottish Jewry⁹. Overwhelmingly Scottish Jews described themselves as white: 97% gave this as their ethnicity. The country of birth of Jews is in keeping with this ethnicity: 70% were born in Scotland and 16% in England. Of those born elsewhere, 3% each were from the USA and the Middle East, just under 2% came from EU countries, and slightly more than 1% were born in Eastern Europe. Scottish Jews are no longer an immigrant community and, given that the census of England and Wales recorded 2782 Jews by religion who were born in Scotland,¹⁰ have recently been a community of emigrants.

Presence, location and housing

The 6580 Jews of Scotland constituted slightly more than one-tenth of 1% of the total Scottish population. It was concentrated in Large Urban Areas¹¹ with 81% of Jews in such areas. This population clustering is very marked as 49% lived in East Renfrewshire where they made up 3.5% of the population. A further 17% of Jews were in Glasgow City, and 12% in the City of Edinburgh.

The majority (6191) lived in a household where the Household Reference Person¹² (HRP) was Jewish. A further 284 people (4% of the total) were in a medical, care or other communal establishment (such as a student hostel). The Jewish group had the highest proportion of all religious groups (2.5%) living in medical and care establishments, reflecting its older age profile.

In the main, Jews live in unshared accommodation: 62% lived in a house or bungalow and 38% in a flat, maisonette or apartment. As regards the size and structure of their households, 19% were in single-person households¹³ and 71% lived in

⁹ The classifications for ethnicity in Scotland were: White, Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Other South Asian, Chinese, Caribbean, African, Black Scottish or Other Black, Any Mixed Background or Other Ethnic Group.

¹⁰ This group of expatriates is equal to 43% of currently Jewish Scots.

¹¹ i.e. Settlements of over 125,000 people

¹² Who have historically been called Head of Household.

¹³ Again reflecting the agedness of the Jewish population

single-family households. These homes accommodated 1719 Jewish families, of which 37% (636 families) had dependent children. 42% of families with children had one dependent child, 43% had two children, and 15% had three or more. Lone parent families accounted for 15% of families with dependent children. Jewish homes are predominantly owner-occupied¹⁴ (77%) with 9% living in privately-rented homes and 8% in local authority or other social-rented housing. This compared with national patterns of 67% owner occupation and 33% renting.¹⁵ Households with a Jewish HRP have the lowest level of overcrowding with 70% of those households having an Occupancy Rating of +1 or more.¹⁶ Only 9% of Jewish households were below the occupancy rating standard and the Jewish population as a whole has excess rooms.

Marriage

The census examined marital status of the 5615 Jews aged 16 years and over. Of these 27% were single (never married), 45% were in a first marriage, and 6% were remarried. Two per cent were separated, 7% divorced, and 13% widowed. Of all religious groups, Jews were most likely to be widowed. The census analyses threw light on inter-religion marriage patterns.¹⁷ For 55% of the 1807 married couples in which at least one partner was Jewish, the other partner was also Jewish, this was the lowest proportion of endogamy for any non-Christian religious group. In 23% of marriages the non-Jewish partner was Christian¹⁸, and in 13% the partner had no religion. The religion of 7% of partners was not given.

There were additionally 234 opposite sex co-habiting couples where at least one partner was Jewish. These show a very different choice of partner. Fewer than one

¹⁴ Owned includes 'owned outright', 'owns with help of mortgage or loan', or 'shared ownership'.

¹⁵ Only Sikhs had higher overall levels: 82% lived in owner occupied homes.

¹⁶ Occupancy rating relates the actual number of rooms in a household to the number of rooms required by the household. It takes into account the number of people in the household, their ages and their relationship.

¹⁷ It must be stressed that this is NOT an intermarriage rate – simply a snapshot of whom Jews were married to on census night.

¹⁸ 11% of partners were Church of Scotland, 6% each were Roman Catholic and Other Christian.

in ten (8%) were between two Jews, and for 32% the other partner was Church of Scotland. In 30% of these co-habiting couples, the non-Jewish partner had no religion. This higher proportion where at least one partner does not have any current faith is found consistently for mixed partnerships in all religious groups. Cohabiting couples are 12% of all opposite sex couples whether married and cohabiting.

The religion of children will generally have been ascribed by the person completing the census form on their behalf, normally their parents, and is therefore influenced by that of their parents. Jewish couples reported religion for 822 children; 94% were ascribed Jewish, 1% were recorded as No Religion, and for 2% the question was not answered.

Age

For over 30 years, indirect research has shown that the Jewish community in Britain is aged when compared with British society at large. The census data confirmed this with respect to Scotland. While some 19% of the total Scottish population was of pensionable age, 30% of Jews were in this age group. The difference is even more marked when those aged 75 and over are compared. Here the national proportion was 7%, as against 16% for Jews. The long recognised greater longevity of women is reflected by the 19% of Jewish women aged 75 and over, compared with 12% of Jewish men. This Scottish Jewish profile is more aged than British Jewry as whole, where 12% of all Jews by religion were aged 75 and over, and is partly a result of Jewish emigration from Scotland over the past three decades.

In contrast, only 23% of the Scottish Jewish population was aged 24 and under, compared with 31% of the total population and with 49% of Muslims. The Jewish and Muslim groups represent two stages of population development: at the start of the 20th century the age structure of British Jewry was like that of Muslims but has aged through the combination in mainstream Jewry of a falling birth-rate and increased longevity.

Education and occupation

The census defines people in the age-range 16 to 74 as the working age population, and 71% of Scottish Jews (4593) were in this category compared with 74% of the total

population. Of this Jewish working population, 57% were economically active, i.e. working or looking for work whether full- or part- time, immediately prior to the census, 13% were students¹⁹, and 29% were economically inactive. This last group was predominantly retired persons (49%), permanently sick or disabled (20%), or those at home looking after a home and family (18%). This last statistic is echoed in the different employment rates of Jewish men and women: 78% of men were economically active compared with 63% of women. Viewed from the opposite pole, with 5%, Jews had the lowest unemployment rate, compared with the national rate of 7%.

In line with historic Jewish employment patterns, 27% of those working were self-employed either full- or part-time, compared with a national proportion of 11%, contributing to the 13% of all Jewish males aged 16 to 64 years who were small employers or own account workers. 36% of Jewish men and 17% of Jewish women in employment were self-employed. Within this self-employed group, 22% worked part-time and 78% were full-time. Whether full-time or part-time, 46% of the Jewish self-employed did not have any employees. These self-employment patterns contribute to the finding that 60% of Jews in employment work in organisations with fewer than 25 employees.

While 13% of Jews aged 16 to 74 were students, the national proportion is 7%. This is a pointer to the high levels of educational attainment of the Jewish group highlighted by Levels of Qualification²⁰ according to age. While 33% of the national total population aged 16 to 74 had no qualifications, the proportion fell to 23% for Jews. Marked variations are revealed when age is taken into account: 51% of Jews in the oldest age-group (pensionable age to age 74) had no qualifications, falling to 9% of

¹⁹ However, when looking at full-time students as a proportion of all Jews aged 18 and over we find that only 9% are in full-time education – another reflection of the Jewish age profile

²⁰ Levels of Qualification are defined as: *Group 1:* 'O' Grade, Standard Grade, Intermediate 1, Intermediate 2, City and Guilds Craft, SVQ level 1 or 2, or equivalent; *Group 2:* Higher Grade, CSYS, ONC, OND, City and Guilds Advanced Craft, RSA Advanced Diploma, SVQ level 3 or equivalent; *Group 3:* HND, HNC, RSA Higher Diploma, SVQ level 4 or 5, or equivalent; *Group 4:* First degree, Higher Degree, Professional Qualification

Jews aged 16 to 29. Conversely, 21% of the older group had Group 4 qualifications, rising to 48% of those aged 30 to 49 years. To put this in perspective, nationally 24% of 30 – 49 year olds had these highest level qualifications.

High educational attainment leads to better career prospects and occupation. The occupation structure of the Jewish population confirms this relationship: 51% of employed Jews aged 16 to 74 were in higher managerial and professional occupations (compared with 23% nationally), 16% were in associate professional and occupations (national proportion 14%). Favoured industries were wholesale and retail trade and repairs (21%), real estate, renting and business activities (19%), health and social work (12%), education (11%) and manufacturing (10%).

General health

One major reason why Jewish communal organisations backed the religion question was their need for firm statistics on which to plan social welfare provision that would relate to both the age and the state of health of the community. While there were indirect estimates of the community's age structure, there was no data on state of health, nor on the extent to which Jewish families take responsibility for the care of family members or others. The census enquired about general state of health over the preceding 12 months and whether people had any limiting long-term illness. A weak and subjective question showed that, for Jews of all ages, 64% assessed their health as 'good' and 23% felt it was 'fairly good'. The gender affect is shown by the 89% of Jewish men compared to 87% of Jewish women who felt their health was 'good or fairly good'. Additionally, the combined age and gender affect is apparent in that, compared to the overall assessment, only 71% of men and 68% of women aged 75 and over felt their health was good or fairly good.

The general levels of *perceived* good health and gender differentiation are echoed in data on limiting long-term illness: overall 24% of Jews reported having such an illness but unsurprisingly this level varies with age. Nationally 5% of all people aged below 16 years were reported as having a disability or long-term illness, with the proportions being 4% and 2% for Jewish men and women respectively. These levels rose for both men and women through all age groups, so that 61% of Jewish men and 67% of Jewish women aged 75 and over had some disability or long-term illness, but these rates were still slightly lower than the national levels for this oldest age-group.

Having an aged or sick element in any population can mean that individuals have to provide some sort of care for family members, friends or neighbours. In fact 11% of Jews said they provided at least some form of care²¹ with 7% providing between 1 and 19 hours per week, 1% giving 20 to 49 hours a week, and 2% providing 50 hours or more.

How many Jews in Scotland?

The census raised the question of the exact number of Jews in Scotland, but the number who did not answer the question puts that in doubt. However any total other than that given in the census must be based on sound assumptions. Beyond the boundaries of *halachah*, and with or without allowances for non-Orthodox conversion, such assumptions permit many possible ways of setting limits to Jewish population, resulting in not one but a range of totals.

As a start, two possible definitions are contained within the Scottish census itself. Are Jews only those who gave their current religion as Jewish, or are those who were brought up Jewish also to be included? Speaking very broadly, most British Jews would consider that those brought up as Jews remained Jews unless or until they converted to another religion. A cross-tabulation of the two Scottish questions shows that 10% of those brought up as Jews said they currently had no religion. 8% had another religion and 5% did not say what their current religion was. If the 774 who were brought up Jewish but said they currently had 'No religion' and the 391 who did not answer the religion question are simply added to the 6580 who describe themselves as currently Jewish, then the Jewish population of Scotland would be 7745, that is some 18% higher.

Another approach would be to use survey material showing the extent to which Jews ignored the religion question. Data from the Leeds community, which in age-profile and history is very similar to Scotland, indicated that 13% in Leeds did not self-identify as Jewish. If a similar proportion was added to the 6580 who describe themselves as currently Jewish, a Scottish Jewish population of some 7500 would be indicated.

²¹ This need not have been solely for other Jews.

A third possible assumption is that, at each age, Jews were as likely to ignore the religion question as was the total population. This would add some 340 people to the published total, bringing it to 6920. Less convincingly²², the same logic can be applied the 'no religion' category which would add 1550²³, providing a grand total of 8470.

These various assumptions give estimates of Jewish population ranging from 6920 to 8470, each based on a different definition of "Jewish", so that the people included will have different relationships with the organised community.

²² Because analysis in England and Wales suggested that younger Jewish men were more likely than either older people or women to give 'no religion'.

²³ The calculation assumes that, for each age group, the proportion of Jews in both the 'Religion: None' and 'Religion: Not Answered' categories equals their proportion in the age groups for All people.

Editorial note:

Other, higher, estimates are also possible: for example, taking the 8365 who either responded that they were brought up as Jewish or currently identify as Jewish, and adding 13% for who did not respond (as in the Leeds survey referred to above), yields a total of 9452.

A much higher figure can be derived from the finding of the 1991 Canadian census that 27.6% more people described themselves as Jewish by either religion or ethnicity than by religion alone (405 955 rather than 318 070). Applying this finding to Scotland gives an upper estimate for those who might under any circumstances associate themselves with the Jewish Community, or make calls on its resources of 10 673.

The Jewish Policy Research Institute reported (*JPR News*, Spring 2003) that their own surveys showed that those who refused to answer the question added 11% to the official figures. In addition, they argued that since "Jews should exhibit the same propensity to report 'No Religion', or to refuse to answer the question, as the whole population" ... this argument can consequently be used to create an upper estimate." Using the UK proportion of 28% who reported no religion gives a Scottish figure of 10 791, not significantly different from the estimate based on the Canadian census. However, in Scotland the figure was higher, at 33%, making the Jewish population of Scotland 12 718.

It is worth adding one caveat. As the JPR report puts it: "The answer to the question 'How many Jews are there in the UK?' depends on who is asking the question and for what reason the figure is required. If, for example, it is in order to provide a care home or kosher food services, then a more conservative estimate of 296,000 Jews is probably sufficient. If it is to market Jewish books or plays, then the figure of 342,000 would be more appropriate. If, however, it is in order to protect the community from the threat of antisemitism, then the widest possible estimate of 438,000 is pertinent. It was David Ben Gurion who once observed that, 'for every two Jews there are three opinions'. Perhaps this should be amended to, 'for every Jewish population there are three figures'."

* In fact, as JPR point out, for understandable historical reasons, "Jews, more than most, tend to avoid reporting their religion, least of all to governments."