

# **A DEMOGRAPHIC SNAPSHOT OF THE AFFILIATED CAPE TOWN JEWISH COMMUNITY**

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Kaplan Centre for Jewish Studies  
University of Cape Town

Kerri Serman and Adam Mendelsohn

*Kaplan Centre*  
JEWISH STUDIES

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

A report on the findings of the 2005 Kaplan Centre survey comments that “an ageing Jewish community has adapted well to the new and democratic South Africa”(Bruk and Shain 2006:1). Since then, little quantitative work has explored trends within the South African Jewish population. As a remedy, in 2017, the Kaplan Centre initiated a comprehensive study of the Cape Town community. This report outlines some of the demographic information collected during the course of that project.

The information in this report, such as the number of weddings, emigrations and births, provides insight into the demographic profile of the Cape Town population and how it has changed over time. More broadly, this is the first in a series of papers that focus on South African Jewry, and trends and patterns within South African Jewish communities.

While the 2005 report opened with a reference to the ageing Jewish community, this report will close with a similar sentiment. The information signals a community that is both ageing and experiencing natural population decline. Around 44% of Herzlia graduates since the 1950s have emigrated. The annual number of Orthodox marriages has declined from 71 in 2002 to 35 in 2019. While there is no complete database of births, available datasets point towards a downward trend. While the annual number of communal deaths is similarly trending downwards, the affiliated community is likely in a period of natural population decline (i.e. excluding emigration and semigration). Finally, that the Cape Town affiliated community is an ageing one was made manifest by the communal register: distilling the communal register to a subsample for whom date of birth and gender is known resulted in a median age of 52.

While demographics are one part of the Cape Town community’s story, so too are the findings from the Cape Town Jewish Community Survey – which are available in Serman et al. (2019). While not immune to external economic and political conditions, the survey findings indicate a community with a strong sense of communal connectivity and Jewish identity.

## SECTION 2: COMMUNITY TRENDS

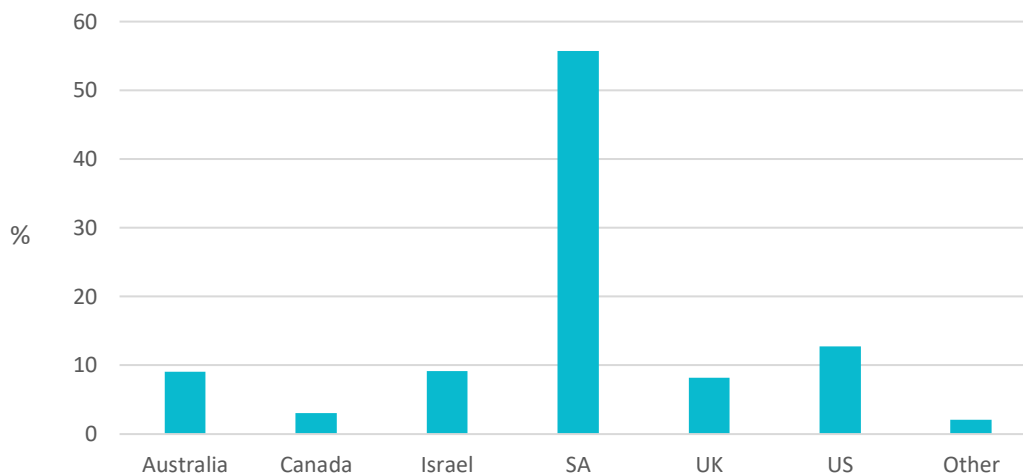
### Emigration

Given the lack of a dedicated database on Jewish emigration from Cape Town, data provided by the United Herzlia Schools' Alumni Association was used as a proxy for emigration. Herzlia is estimated to be a repository for between 70-80% of Cape Town's Jewish learners and keeps records on alumni that go back decades. The most recent data was provided by Herzlia in February 2020. The dataset provides both the current postal address of the individual as well as year of graduation.

While the full dataset consists of around 7,200 alumni, after dropping duplicates, alumni with non-ethnically Jewish names, alumni without any postal address information, and the lone observation dating back to 1942, the final sample includes just over 7,000 alumni. Year of graduation ranges between 1952-2019.

Where are Herzlia alumni living? The current country of residence is provided in Figure 1. As evident from the figure, around 44% of Herzlia graduates (3,117 individuals) have emigrated: 13% are living in the US, 9% in Australia, 9% in Israel, 8% in the UK and 3% in Canada.

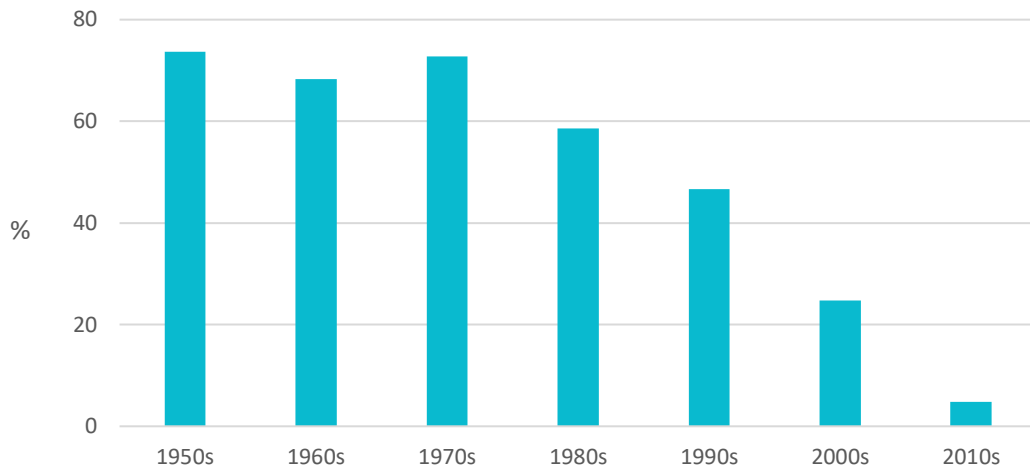
Figure 1: Emigration trends of Herzlia alumni



Source: United Herzlia Schools

Alumni were sorted into graduation decades; for example, those who graduated between 1960-1969 are grouped as "1960s" graduates. Figure 2 reflects the percentage, from each decade, who have emigrated. As evident from the figure, around 70% of alumni from the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s have emigrated. The rate of emigration thereafter declines to 59% of alumni from the 1980s, 47% of 1990s alumni, 25% of alumni from the 2000s and, most recently, 5% of alumni from the 2010s.

**Figure 2: Emigration trends of Herzlia alumni**



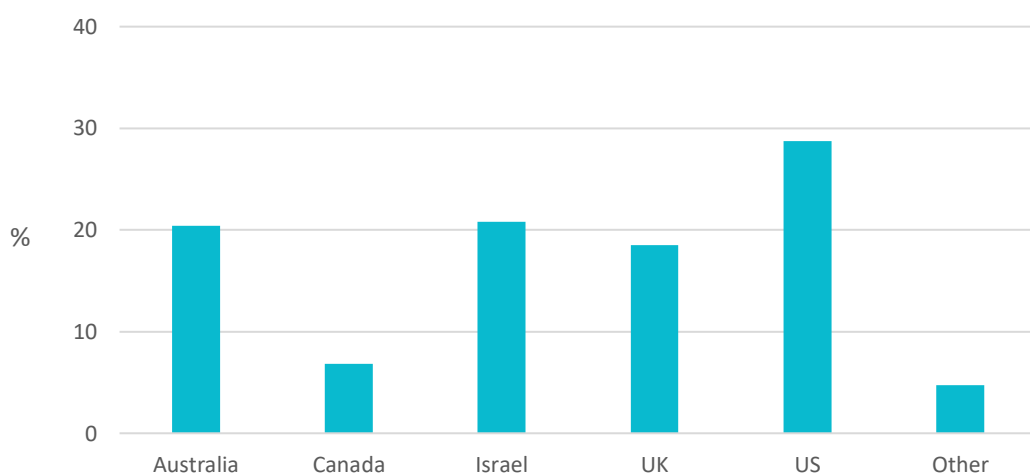
Source: United Herzlia Schools

Note: Year of graduation is missing for around 200 individuals

As reflected in Figure 3, of the subsample of alumni who have emigrated (3,117 individuals), 20% are living in Australia, 7% in Canada, 21% in Israel, 18% in the United Kingdom and 29% in the United States.

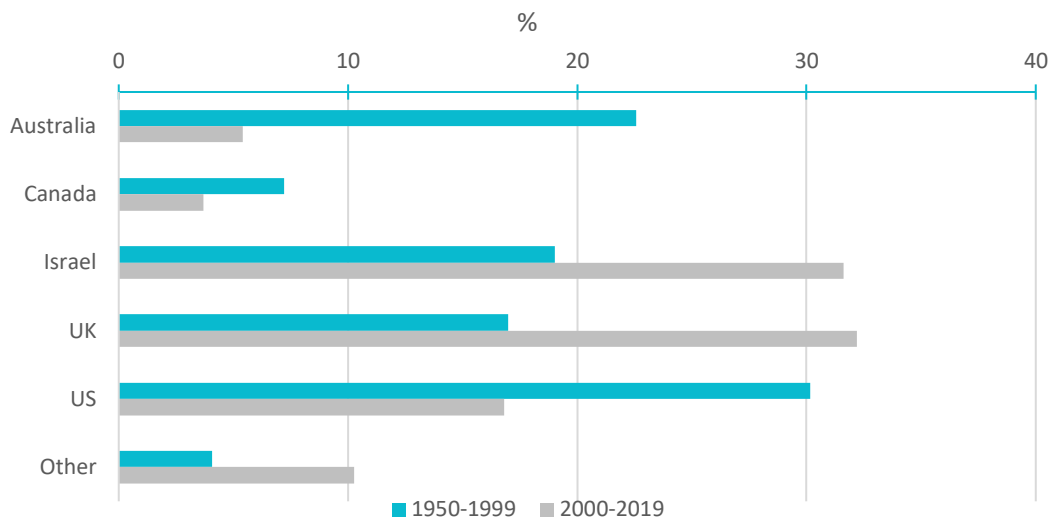
Figure 4 replicates this information for two subsamples: 1950-1999 graduates (2,680 individuals) and 2000-2019 graduates (a smaller group of 351 individuals). The figure indicates that the younger cohort are more typically emigrating to Israel and the United Kingdom relative to the older group.

**Figure 3: Emigration trends of Herzlia alumni**



Source: United Herzlia Schools

Figure 4: Emigration trends of Herzlia alumni



Source: United Herzlia Schools

Note: Around 200 individuals without year of graduation are excluded

## Jewish Geography

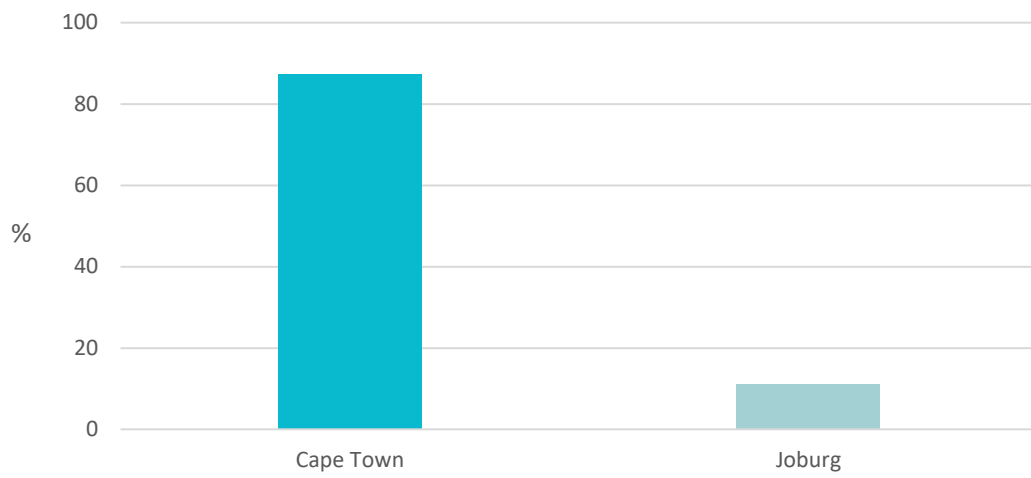
While 3,117 alumni have emigrated, where do the remaining 3,930 alumni living in South Africa reside? Where is this group living? Around 87% are living in Cape Town (3,426 individuals) and 11% are living in Johannesburg (Figure 5).

Figure 6 reflects the main suburbs for those alumni living in Cape Town. Nearly 84% of Capetonian alumni live in the suburbs showcased in the figure, with the remaining 16% distributed across a variety of other suburbs in Cape Town. Sea Point, Fresnaye and Milnerton are the largest suburbs, with 18%, 13% and 10% of alumni, respectively. Camps Bay, Constantia and Green Point are home to 5%, 5% and 4% of alumni, respectively. Between 2-3% of alumni live in Bantry Bay, Oranjezicht, Vredehoek, Claremont, Three Anchor Bay, Hout Bay, Tamboerskloof and Gardens.

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**Figure 5: Main cities of Herzlia alumni living in South Africa**

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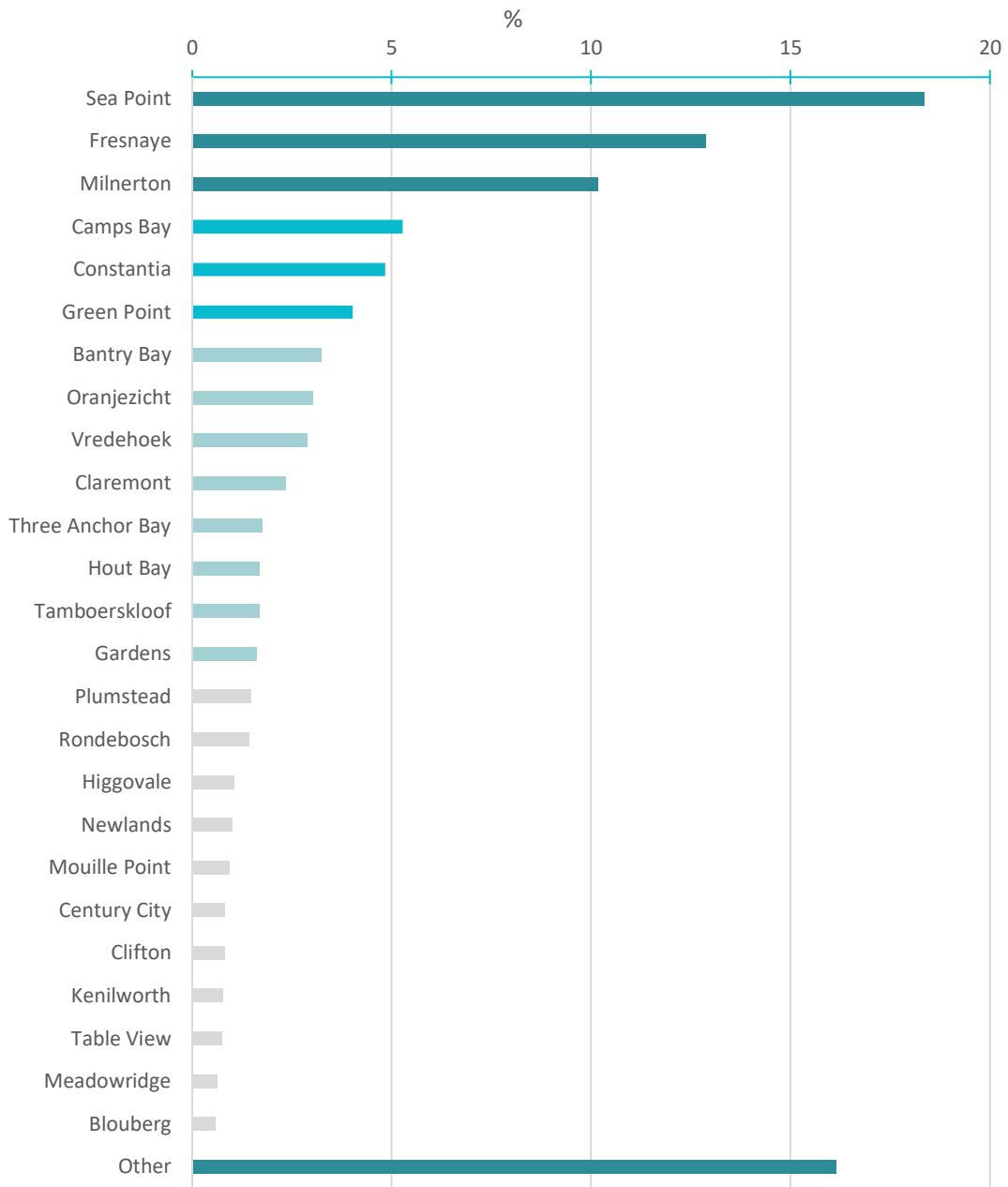
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Source: United Herzlia Schools

Note: 10 individuals without *city* information are excluded

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Figure 6: Main suburbs of Herzlia alumni living in Cape Town



Source: United Herzlia Schools

Note: The following individuals are excluded: 36 without *suburb* information, 217 with PO boxes and 12 with business addresses



## Marriages

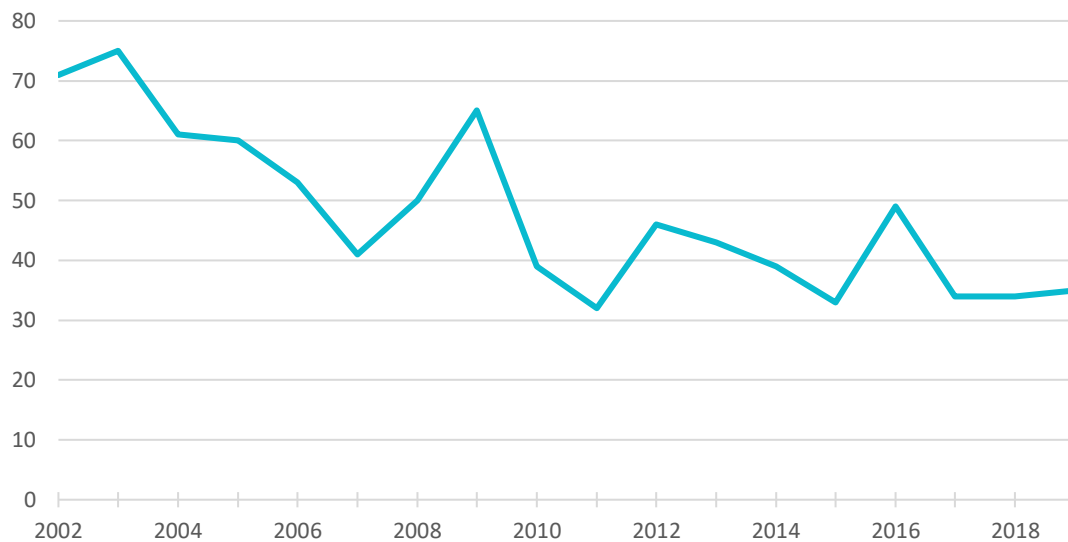
Data on the annual number of Orthodox marriages was provided by the Union of Orthodox Synagogues. Figure 7 plots the number of Orthodox marriages between 2002 and 2019. There has been a total of 860 Orthodox marriages over this period, averaging 48 marriages per year. However, the marriage rate is trending downwards; between 2002-2007, there was an average of 60 Orthodox marriages per year, declining to an average of 46 per year between 2008-2013, and 37 per year between 2014-2019. In addition, the number of marriages has halved over the timeline: from 71 in 2002 to 35 in 2019.

The Cape Town Progressive Jewish Congregation similarly provided annual data on Progressive marriages. Figure 8 plots the number of Progressive marriages between 2007-2017. There have been a total of 147 Progressive marriages over this period, averaging 13 marriages per year. In contrast to Orthodox marriages, Progressive marriages have remained relatively constant in recent years: oscillating between 12 and 14 per annum since 2012. Moreover, the number of Progressive marriages do not offset the decline in Orthodox marriages.

## Divorces

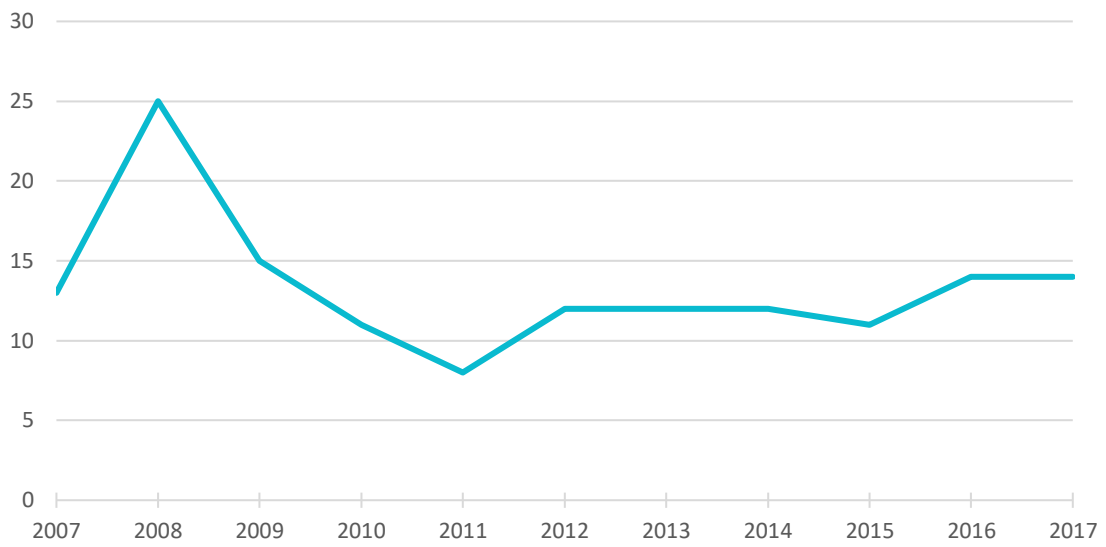
Figure 9 plots the annual number of Orthodox divorces between 2002 and 2019. While the number of divorces does oscillate, the figure exhibits the same downward trend as Figure 7 (Orthodox marriages). Over the period, there have been 289 Orthodox divorces, with an average of 16 divorces per year. The average number of divorces is on the decline: decreasing from an average of 20 between 2002-2007 to 15 in 2008-2013 and 13 in 2014-2019. When comparing marriages with divorce: there were 860 Orthodox marriages between 2002-2019 and 289 divorces over the same period. While this is not a one-to-one mapping of marriages and divorces, it implies a divorce rate of over thirty percent.

Figure 7: Annual number of Orthodox marriages



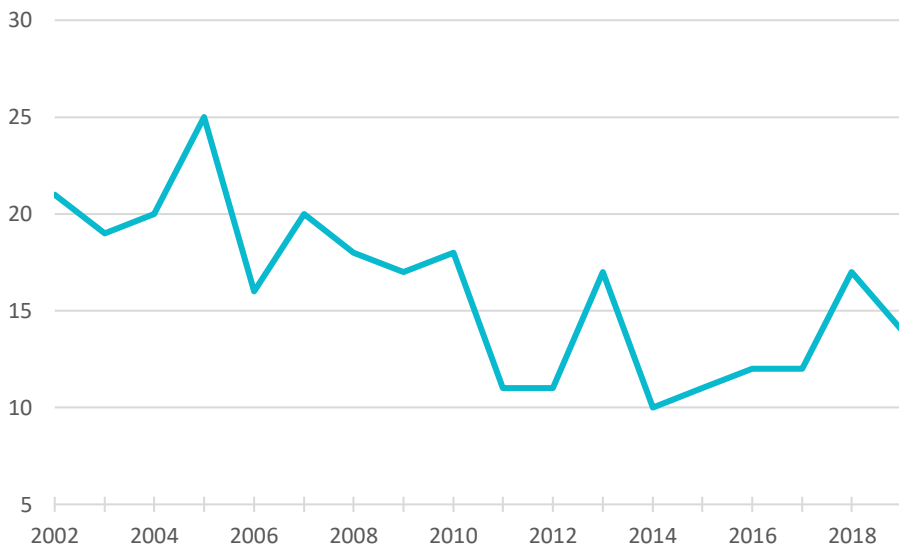
Source: Union of Orthodox Synagogues

**Figure 8: Annual number of Progressive marriages**



Source: Cape Town Progressive Jewish Congregation

**Figure 9: Annual number of Orthodox divorces**



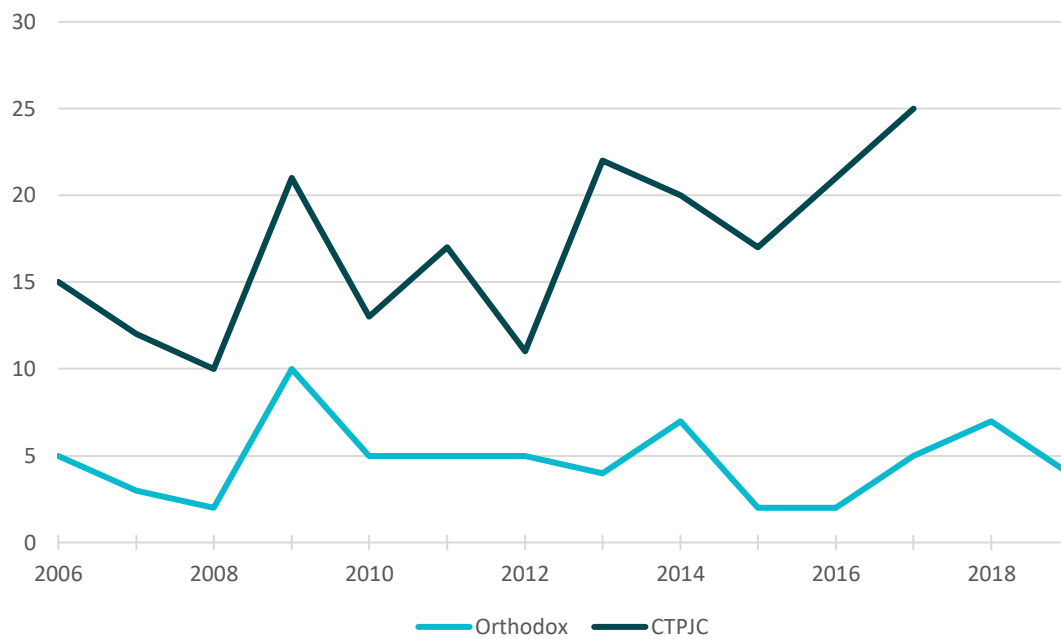
Source: Union of Orthodox Synagogues

## Conversions

Both the Union of Orthodox Synagogues and the Cape Town Progressive Jewish Congregation provided data on the annual number of conversions. There have been a total of 66 Orthodox conversions between 2006 and 2019, averaging 5 conversions per year. While the number of Orthodox conversions does oscillate around this mean, the absolute number ranges between two and ten per year, without any sustained increase over the timeline.

In contrast, there have been 204 Progressive conversions between 2006-2017, with an average of 17 conversions per year. The number of Progressive conversions has increased marginally in recent years: from an average of 12 conversions for the period 2006-2008, increasing to 17, 18 and 21 for consecutive three year periods.

**Figure 10: Annual number of Orthodox and Progressive conversions**



Sources: Union of Orthodox Synagogues, Cape Town Progressive Jewish Congregation

## Births

In the absence of a centralised dataset of Jewish births, a composite database of communal births was collated from the following three sources:

- Cape Town birth records captured by the Union of Orthodox Synagogues for the period 2015-2017. The data reflects births of members of Orthodox shuls (and their relatives). The data is reflective until the end of 2017.
- Cape Town birth records captured by United Herzlia Schools for the period 2005-2017. The data is captured by the Alumni department and is also reflective until the end of 2017.
- Comments about Cape Town births captured in the “notes” field of the communal register. The data was provided by the United Jewish Campaign in October 2017 and is thus not reflective of the whole of 2017.

For comparative purposes, this data is then compared to enrolment rates for Jewish Grade 1 pupils between 2013-2019. Data on enrolments was sourced from both United Herzlia Schools and Phyllis Jowell Jewish Day School. While this data is indicative of birth rates, it likely includes some individuals born outside Cape Town. While circumcision records are available at the Union of Orthodox Synagogues, this data source was not utilised as the records are not exhaustive.

The datasets provided by United Herzlia Schools, the United Jewish Campaign and the Union of Orthodox Synagogues were each cleaned and duplicated entries within each dataset were dropped.<sup>1</sup> The individual datasets were then merged together to create a composite database of births within the community.<sup>2</sup> These datasets represent verified Cape Town births. In addition, the extended timeseries indicates how the annual number of communal births has changed over time.

Birth rates for each individual dataset and the composite dataset are reflected in Table 1. The composite total reflects a total of 1,295 births between 2005 and 2017, an average of 100 births per year.

Mirroring the decline in Orthodox marriages, Figure 11 – which plots composite births for the period 2005-2017 – signals a downward trend. More specifically, annual birth rates have declined from an average of 111 births per year between 2005-2010, to 91 per year between 2012-2017.

<sup>1</sup> As mentioned, the “notes” field of the UJC dataset was used to extract information on births from the data provided by the United Jewish Campaign. The references to communal births are captured in the notes field along with other comments around engagements, marriages, other births, divorces and finally, deaths. While the date reflected in the comment generally corresponds to the date the comment was entered into the database and not the actual date of birth, in most cases, when comparing births that are recorded in both the Herzlia and United Jewish Campaign databases, the year of birth is consistent (with a few exceptions when the birth occurred at the end of a year).

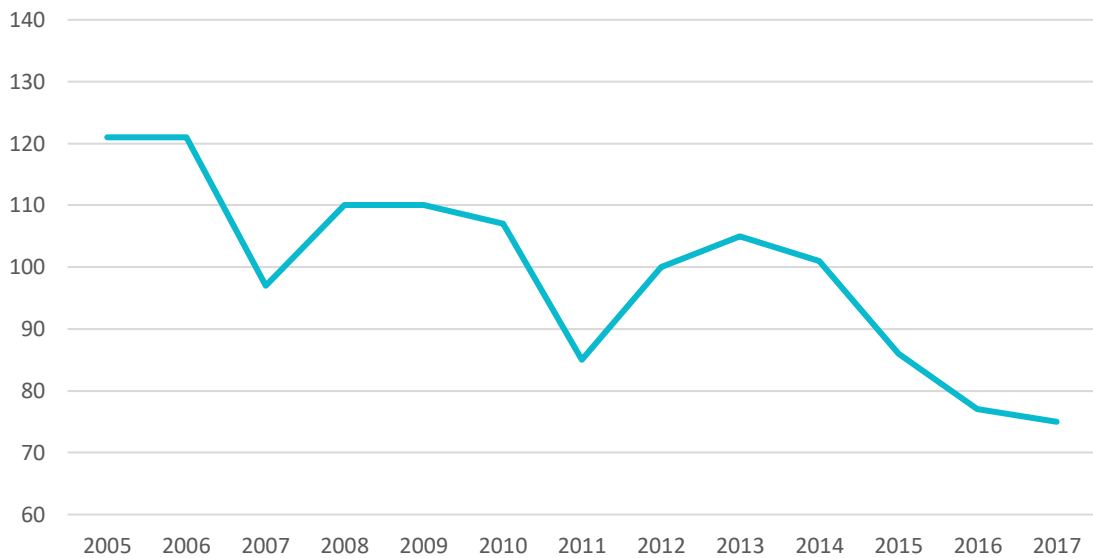
<sup>2</sup> Given the lack of unique identifier across all three datasets (for example an ID number), the datasets were matched on the names, surnames and dates of births.

**Table 1: Annual number of community births**

Year	Union of Orthodox Synagogues	United Herzlia Schools	United Jewish Campaign	Composite total of communal births
2005		121		121
2006		121		121
2007		97		97
2008		110		110
2009		110		110
2010		107		107
2011		85		85
2012		99	5	100
2013		95	65	105
2014		85	77	101
2015	19	77	64	86
2016	18	63	52	77
2017	21	69	38	75
<b>Total</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>1239</b>	<b>301</b>	<b>1295</b>

Sources: United Herzlia Schools, Union of Orthodox Synagogues, United Jewish Campaign

**Figure 11: Annual number of community births**



Sources: United Herzlia Schools, Union of Orthodox Synagogues, United Jewish Campaign

Note: refers to number of children born (i.e. accounts for twins and triplets)

For comparative purposes, Table 2 replicates enrolment rates for Grade 1 pupils at United Herzlia Schools and Phyllis Jowell Jewish Day School between 2013 and 2019. The learners' year of birth is inferred from their enrolment year: enrolment years between 2013-2019 are used as proxies for birth rates between 2006-2012. As mentioned, while these students are denoted as Jewish, this approach does not account for emigration, immigration, and semigration.

While the birth rates from the composite database (Table 1) are underestimated when compared to enrolment rates, the numbers in both tables are broadly comparable. For example, Table 2 indicates that 878 Grade 1 learners have passed through the schools between 2013-2014; in comparison, birth rates for 2006-2012, as reflected in Table 1, are 730. We thus use the figures from the composite dataset as a leading indicator for affiliated communal births, with the proviso that these figures are underestimated.

<b>Grade 1 enrolment</b>	<b>Corresponding year of birth</b>	<b>United Herzlia Schools</b>	<b>Phyllis Jowell Jewish Day School</b>	<b>Total Grade 1 enrolment</b>
2013	2006	110	17	127
2014	2007	110	17	127
2015	2008	122	23	145
2016	2009	118	10	128
2017	2010	119	8	127
2018	2011	118	8*	126
2019	2012	90	8*	98
<b>Total</b>		<b>787</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>878</b>

Sources: United Herzlia Schools, Phyllis Jowell Jewish Day Schools

Note: \* Estimates for 2018 and 2019 for Phyllis Jowell Jewish Day School are based on 2017

## Deaths

Both the Union of Orthodox Synagogues and the Cape Town Progressive Jewish Congregation provided data on the annual number of community deaths. This information is reflected in Tables 3 and 4.

While the estimates provided by the Union of Orthodox Synagogues for the number of Progressive funerals is generally consistent (but not identical) to the number of burials reported by the Cape Town Progressive Jewish Congregation, Table 3 does not include cremations. Table 4 is thus more indicative of the number of deaths within the Progressive community.

Against this background, Figure 12 plots the annual number of community deaths for the period 2007-2017. The figure is an amalgamation of the data from Tables 3 and 4 (i.e. using the data from Table 4 to account for deaths within the Progressive community). There have been a total of 2,582 funerals and cremations since 2007, amounting to an average of 235 deaths per year. The annual number of deaths has consistently declined since 2012. Moreover, while the number of deaths averaged 241 per year between 2007-2011, this average declined to 222 between 2013 and 2017.

**Table 3: Annual number of community deaths**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Progressive</b>	<b>Member</b>	<b>Non-Member</b>	<b>Total</b>
2007	21	178	24	223
2008	27	149	24	200
2009	27	141	21	189
2010	38	147	42	227
2011	23	126	36	185
2012	40	168	19	227
2013	23	161	22	206
2014	30	139	33	202
2015	34	129	33	196
2016	29	134	31	194
2017	31	92	48	171
<b>Total</b>	<b>323</b>	<b>1564</b>	<b>333</b>	<b>2220</b>

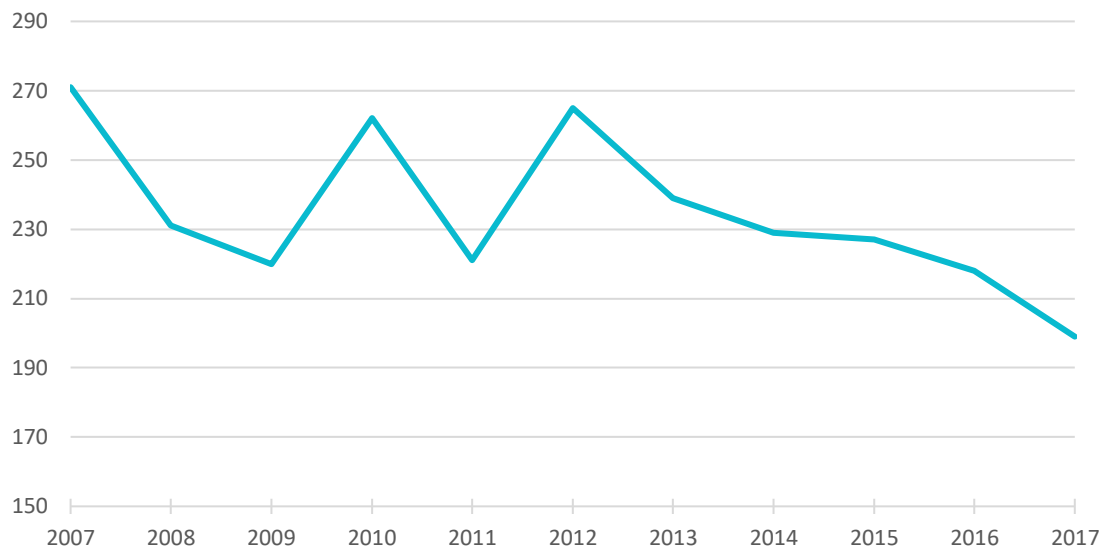
Source: Union of Orthodox Synagogues

**Table 4: Annual number of deaths within the Progressive community**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Burials</b>	<b>Cremations</b>	<b>Total</b>
2007	23	46	69
2008	29	29	58
2009	25	33	58
2010	40	33	73
2011	30	29	59
2012	46	32	78
2013	25	31	56
2014	30	27	57
2015	33	32	65
2016	29	24	53
2017	28	31	59
<b>Total</b>	<b>338</b>	<b>347</b>	<b>685</b>

Source: Cape Town Jewish Progressive Congregation

Figure 12: Annual number of communal deaths



Sources: Union of Orthodox Synagogues, Cape Town Progressive Jewish Congregation

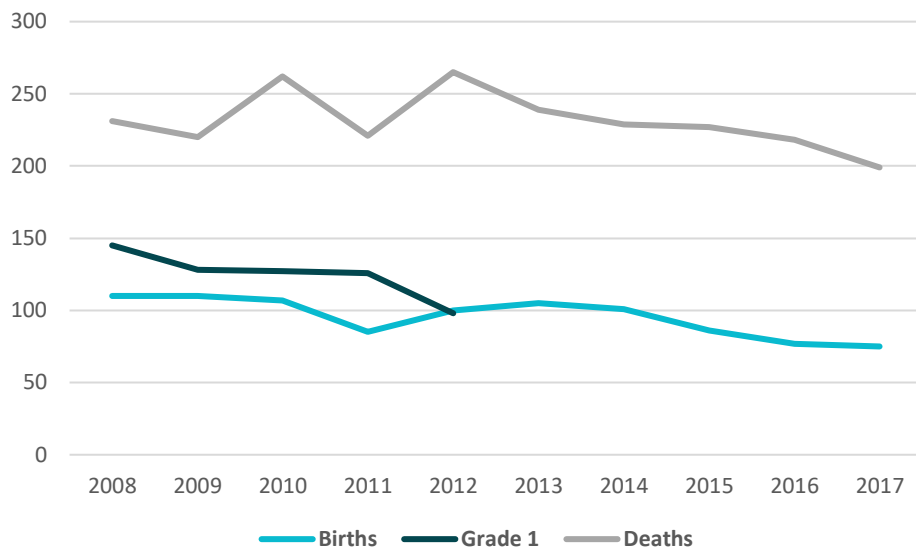
## Natural Population Decline

When assessing the net change in the size of the community by comparing births and deaths (and excluding immigration, semigration and emigration), it appears that the community is in a state of natural population decline as deaths annually outpace births.

More specifically, Figure 13 contrasts annual births (from Table 1) and Grade 1 enrolments (Table 2) with the number of communal deaths (Figure 12) over the period 2008-2017. Over this period, there were an estimated 956 births (Table 1) and 2,311 deaths. This signifies a net natural decline of 1,355 people between 2008-2017. The average natural population decline over the period is 136 people per year. As per the discussion around the birth rates, the extent of population decline is no doubt overestimated. These figures will be retrospectively updated with each new year of Grade 1 enrolment.



**Figure 13: Net natural population decline**

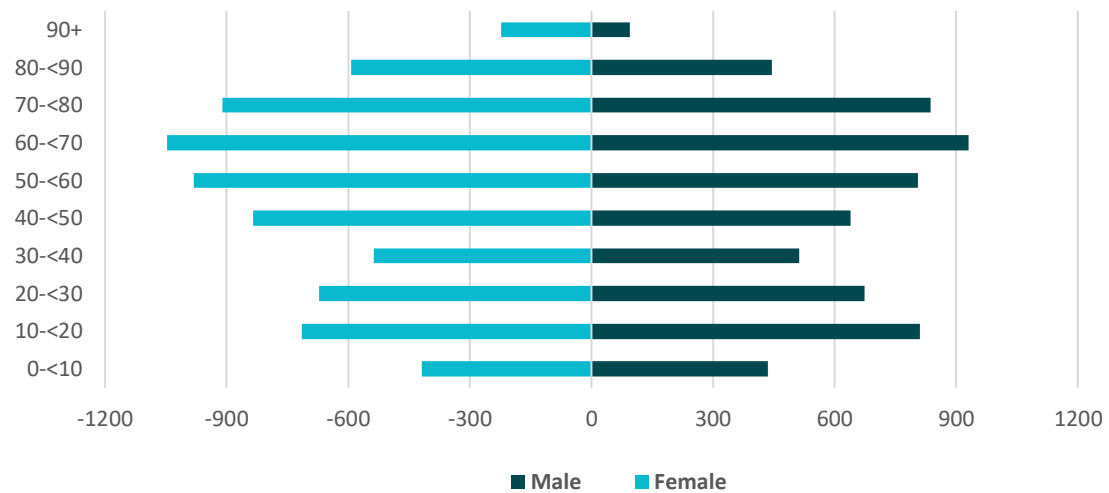


Sources: United Herzlia Schools, United Jewish Campaign, Union of Orthodox Synagogues

## Population Pyramid

The communal register, under the custodianship of the United Jewish Campaign, is used as a proxy for the Cape Town Jewish population. The 2017 version of the communal register was cleaned and condensed to a subsample of around 13,000 community members for whom both date of birth and gender is specified. The population pyramid of this proxy for the Cape Town Jewish community is reflected in Figure 14. Just over half (53%) are female. The pyramid highlights that Cape Town is an ageing community: the median age is 52.

**Figure 14: Population Pyramid of the Cape Town Jewish Community**



Source: United Jewish Campaign

## Affiliated Population Estimates

The communal register, maintained by the United Jewish Campaign, is the largest data repository of the affiliated Cape Town community. After cleaning a 2017 version, the communal register contained around 14,000 existent community members. However, while conducting fieldwork for the Cape Town survey, the field team became aware of individuals, randomly drawn from the communal register, who were deceased, had semigrated or emigrated, or were not Jewish. As these individuals accounted for 5% of the random sample drawn from this pool, the population estimate is adjusted downwards to 13,252.

But who is missing from this estimate? To answer this question, key membership lists from schools, shuls, and other communal organisations were compared to the communal register. A coverage percent, reflecting the proportion of individuals found in both the communal register and the relevant membership list, was created for each dataset. A more general weighted coverage percent was then created for schools and shuls: 83% across schools and 89% across shuls (indicating good coverage of the affiliated community). The United Herzlia Schools' parents list was also compared to the communal register: 82% of mothers and 76% of fathers appeared on both lists. At the conclusion of this matching exercise, just over 1,200 individuals were reflected in organisational datasets and not on the communal register.

Finally, while the total number of unmatched individuals is around 1,200, it is unlikely that all these individuals should be included in the Cape Town population. Administrative assistants were unable to vouch for all unmatched individuals (i.e. confirm they live in Cape Town, have not emigrated and/or are not deceased). In addition, there are likely to be spillovers across datasets. As such, lower, middle and upper bounds are considered. With a lower bound of 25%, the population estimate of 13,252 is inflated by 312 individuals for a total affiliated population of 13,564. Conversely, with the upper bound of 75%, 937 individuals are included, yielding an affiliated population of 14,189. With the middle bound of 50%, the estimate of 13,252 is inflated by 625 individuals yielding a mid-range affiliated population estimate of 13,877.

Given the reliance on communal datasets, this estimate does not include unaffiliated community members who do not appear on any of a number of membership lists.

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Kaplan Centre for Jewish Studies  
University of Cape Town  
Private Bag X3, Rondebosch, 7701  
Tel: +27 (0)21 650 3062  
Email: [KC@uct.ac.za](mailto:KC@uct.ac.za)

*Kaplan Centre*  
JEWISH STUDIES