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Institute for
Jewish Policy Research

The coronavirus papers 1.5

# Jewish employment patterns:

## How the COVID-19 pandemic is affecting Jewish people's working lives

**March 2021**

**The coronavirus papers** comprise a series of reports based on a national survey of Jews across the UK conducted by JPR in July 2020, during the COVID-19 outbreak. The studies look at the effects of the virus on Jewish people's health, jobs, finances, relationships and Jewish lives, and aim to provide Jewish organisations with the data they need to navigate their way through the pandemic and to help revitalise Jewish life.

## 1 / Introduction

This is the fifth in a series of papers investigating how the coronavirus outbreak affected Jews across the UK from its start in early 2020 to when the data for this study were gathered in mid- to late July of the same year. Each of these papers explores a different question, variously touching on the themes of physical and mental health, socioeconomics, community income, Jewish life, caring and support. This paper looks at how Jewish people's working lives have been impacted by the pandemic. It begins by examining how the experience of Jews compares to that of the wider population, and explores the issues of employment, redundancy and furlough (leave of absence from work), as well as other work disruptions such as income reduction, working from home and caring for children. With very little data on Jewish employment available, this report provides key insights into the ways in which the community was impacted over the first five months of the pandemic and points to how it is likely to have been affected subsequently. By providing this analysis, we hope to help UK Jewish community organisations and foundations to respond appropriately to the challenges identified. Basic details about the methods used in the survey can be found at the end of this paper, as well as in a longer methodological paper available from JPR.

## 2 / The impact of the pandemic: employment, unemployment and furlough

When the coronavirus pandemic arrived in the UK in March 2020 one of the biggest impacts was on people's working lives. Almost overnight, many found themselves working from home under a new set of circumstances, while many others were put on furlough or made redundant. One way to understand what happened to the working population is to look at changes in the employment rate. This is simply the proportion of those who are employed out of all those who could be employed, conventionally based on the 16 to 64 age band. In the first quarter of 2020 (January to March), just prior to the first lockdown across the country, the UK employment rate was 76.3%, a historically high

level (Table 1). The Jewish employment rate at that time was rather lower at 74.5%, although this figure is a result of certain idiosyncrasies in this measurement, as discussed shortly.

However, by July 2020, just after the first wave of the pandemic, the general employment rate had declined from 76.3% to 75.6%. Although this appears to be a small drop (-0.7%), it represents a reversal of a longstanding trend, since employment rates had been climbing steadily for nearly ten years. The employment rate for Jews also declined, but the fall was smaller, at -0.3%. Since the survey was carried out in July, the national employment rate has declined further still, with Office for National Statistics (ONS) data indicating a rate of 75.0% in December 2020. It is reasonable to assume that the employment rate will have also fallen among Jews.[1]

The employment rate varies by gender and tends to be higher for men than for women, even though the female rate has been steadily increasing for decades. In the general population, the male employment rate before the pandemic was 80.1%, compared with 72.6% for women – a 7.5 percentage point difference. Among Jews, the gender gap was smaller at 4.8 percentage points, possibly a reflection of the fact that Jewish women tend to achieve higher educational levels than average.

However, the experiences of men and women during the first five months of the pandemic differed for both Jews and non-Jews alike. In both the general and Jewish populations, the employment rate fell more sharply for men than for women – indeed for Jewish women, it appeared to increase by 0.6%. The reasons for this are unclear and could possibly be a statistical anomaly, but it may be related to their above average tendency to have tertiary level qualifications. As we gain access to more detailed government data, further insights will follow.

**Table 1. Employment rates, general and Jewish population aged 16-64, United Kingdom**

| Time | General population | | | Jewish population | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | All | Male | Female | All | Male | Female |
| February 2020 | 76.3% | 80.1% | 72.6% | 74.5% | 76.9% | 72.1% |
| July 2020 | 75.6% | 79.1% | 72.1% | 74.2% | 75.9% | 72.7% |
| **Percentage point change** | **-0.7%** | **-1.0%** | **-0.5%** | **-0.3%** | **-1.0%** | **+0.6%** |

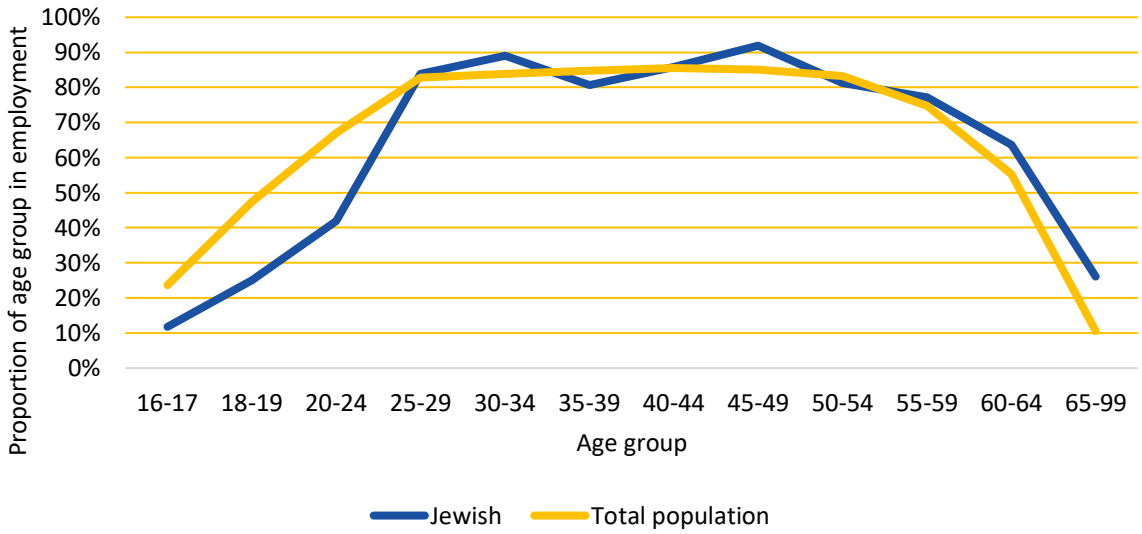
Sources: General data – Office for National Statistics[2]; Jewish data: JPR survey.

It is important to note that the reason Jews exhibit a lower employment rate than the general population (Table 1) is because Jews tend to enter the work force at a later stage (as they are more likely than average to go into tertiary education). As an aside, Jews also tend to enter retirement later, especially Jewish men (i.e. beyond the age of 64). So, the conventional 'working age' bracket of 16-64, on which the employment rate is based, is a statistical convention that does not fully capture differences between Jews and others, even though it offers important and valuable insights. This is best illustrated by looking at the Office for National Statistics (ONS) data shown in Figure 1. The employment rates of the Jewish and general populations are similar between the ages of 25 to 59, but they diverge in the younger and older age groups: they are lower than average among younger Jewish people, but higher than average among older Jewish ones.

[1] JPR is planning a follow-up study later this year to assess this.

[2] See: Office for National Statistics' Labour Force Survey, 'Employment in the UK: February 2021. Estimates of employment, unemployment and economic inactivity for the UK.' https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/bulletins/employmentintheuk/latest

**Figure 1. Proportion of age group in employment, Jewish and general population, Great Britain, 2019/2020 (Jewish n=2,940, Total n=710,586)**




Source: based on the combination of data from three APS datasets: 8647 - Annual Population Survey, April 2019 - March 2020; 8685 - Annual Population Survey, July 2019 - June 2020; 8742 - Annual Population Survey, October 2019 - September 2020.

The other key indicator economists use when trying to understand the job market is *unemployment*, which provides a crucial measure of the health of an economy and the economic welfare of groups within that economy. This is not simply the opposite of the employment rate, since not everyone of working age is able to work or looking for work. Instead, the unemployment rate is the proportion of the economically active population (i.e. those in work, plus those seeking and available to work) who are unemployed. Prior to the pandemic, the national unemployment rate stood at 4.0%, a historically low level, which had declined steadily since 2012. The Jewish unemployment rate was lower still, at 3.6% in February 2020 (Table 2). However, by July, the Jewish unemployment rate appears to have risen sharply, almost doubling to 6.6%, overtaking the general rate, which rose to 4.5%. The general unemployment rate then increased further to 5.1% by December 2020, the most recent period for which data were available. Further research is required to determine whether the Jewish unemployment rate increased similarly at this time.

**Table 2. The unemployment rate, all people aged 16 and above, Jewish and general population, UK**

| | General population | Jewish population |
|---|---|---|
| February 2020 | 4.0% | 3.6% |
| July 2020 | 4.5% | 6.6% |
| **Percentage point change** | **0.5%** | **2.8%** |

Source: Office for National Statistics, Labour Force Survey. 'Unemployment rate (aged 16 and over, seasonally adjusted).

Note: The Jewish population figure is based on all those in the JPR survey who reported being: employed; on paid/unpaid leave from employment (including furlough); self-employed and currently working; self-employed but not currently working; and unemployed.

On first impression, it appears as if Jews were hit harder by increased unemployment than the general population. However, it is very likely that some of the idiosyncrasies of Jewish employment patterns,

alluded to earlier, may distort the figures. One aspect of the difference in Jewish employment patterns is that Jews are much more likely than average to be self-employed. It is possible that the furlough scheme – set up by the UK Government to help employers put employees on temporary leave rather than make them redundant[3] – masks the 'true' level of unemployment in the general population, since many employees defined as 'employed' are, in fact, not working and on furlough. Such masking is less likely to appear in Jewish population data because self-employment is more common.

To understand more fully the effects of the pandemic on Jewish people's employment patterns, it is worth extending our view to include all Jewish adults, rather than those simply aged 16-64 who are either in or seeking employment. Table 3 reveals how the Jewish population's economic structure changed between February 2020, just prior to the pandemic, and July 2020. It shows, for example, that whilst we see a five percentage point decline in the proportion of adult Jews in employment, there was also a five percentage point increase in the proportion of Jews on leave from employment (including furlough). We also see the near doubling of the proportion unemployed (note this is *not* the same measure as the unemployment rate discussed above).

The proportion of all people aged 16 and above on furlough in the general population stood at 9.5% in mid July 2020, a rather higher level than for Jews (5.2% at most) and, as we have suggested, this is likely related to the high levels of self-employment among Jews.[4]

**Table 3. Change in employment status of UK Jewish adult population (aged 16+) between February and July 2020 (n=6984)**

| Employment status | February 2020 (pre-pandemic) | July 2020 (during pandemic) | Percentage point change |
|---|---|---|---|
| Retired | 20.0% | 20.3% | +0.3% |
| Employed | 46.6% | 41.3% | -5.3% |
| Paid/unpaid leave from employment (including furlough) | X | 5.2% | +5.2% |
| Self-employed | 14.6% | 14.2% | -0.4% |
| Unemployed | 2.1% | 4.0% | +1.9% |
| Permanently sick or disabled | 0.9% | 1.0% | +0.1% |
| Looking after home or family | 3.0% | 3.6% | +0.6% |
| In education at school/college/university | 10.5% | 7.7% | -2.8% |
| Doing something else | 2.3% | 2.7% | +0.4% |
| **Total** | **100.0%** | **100.0%** | |

*Questions: Which of these best describes what you were doing just before the coronavirus outbreak, in February 2020?* [response options as listed, excluding 'Paid/unpaid leave from employment (including furlough)'; *And which of these would you say best describes your current situation?* [response options as listed, although self-employed divided into two options: 'Self-employed and currently working' and 'Self-employed but not currently working].

Even more revealing are the figures in Table 4 which break these data down by sex. It is particularly striking to see the higher proportion of Jewish women on furlough or paid/unpaid leave (6.5%) than

[3] Known as the Job Retention Scheme, it was launched in March 2020 and has continued to date. Under this scheme, furloughed staff currently receive 80% of their salary from the government, up to a cap of £2,500 per month, and continue to hold 'employed' status, even though they are not allowed to work for their employer.
[4] See: HM Revenue & Customs, 'Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme statistics: October 2020', 12 November 2020. Population by sex data: ONS, 'Estimates of the population for the UK, England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland (24 June 2020). Note also that men outnumber women in the workplace by about 1.5 million, rendering this distinction even more acute (ONS data).

Jewish men (3.9%), suggesting that Jewish women have been more vulnerable to these types of measures, despite the rise in their employment rate (Table 1). While rates are higher among both genders in wider society, this difference is far less pronounced in the general UK population, with the equivalent figures being 9.6% of women and 9.4% of men, a gap that has remained constant over time.[5]

Separately, it is also notable that the proportion of Jewish men 'looking after the home' almost doubled (from 0.7% to 1.2%), but that Jewish women continue to dominate in this role, indeed, to an even greater degree several months into the pandemic (rising from 5.0% to 5.9%).

**Table 4. Change in employment status of UK Jewish population (aged 16+plus) between February and July 2020, by sex (n=6972)**

| Employment status | Men | | | Women | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Feb | Jul | Change | Feb | Jul | Change |
| Retired | 17.2% | 17.7% | +0.5% | 22.4% | 22.5% | +0.1% |
| Employed | 49.8% | 44.5% | -5.3% | 43.9% | 38.4% | -5.5% |
| Paid/unpaid leave from employment (including furlough) | x | 3.9% | +3.9% | x | 6.5% | +6.5% |
| Self-employed | 16.0% | 16.2% | +0.2% | 13.2% | 12.4% | -0.8% |
| Unemployed | 2.4% | 4.1% | +1.7% | 2.0% | 3.9% | +1.9% |
| Permanently sick or disabled | 0.6% | 0.6% | 0% | 1.1% | 1.3% | +0.2% |
| Looking after home or family | 0.7% | 1.2% | +0.5% | 5.0% | 5.9% | +0.9% |
| In education at school/college/university | 11.4% | 9.4% | -2.0% | 9.7% | 6.3% | -3.4% |
| Doing something else | 1.9% | 2.4% | +0.5% | 2.6% | 2.9% | +0.3% |
| **Total** | **100.0%** | **100.0%** | | **100.0%** | **100.0%** | |

Note: Figures may not sum to 100% due to rounding.
*Questions: as shown under Table 2.*

In summarising, it is worth noting that before now, employment data on Jews in Britain have rarely been analysed in this way, so these figures are interesting in and of themselves, and important to track consistently and explore more deeply over time. They allow us both to measure key Jewish employment statistics and to compare them with the general population in the context of the pandemic. In brief, they show that the Jewish employment rate was lower than in general both prior to, and five months into, the pandemic. However, this difference is unlikely to be due to Jews working less, but rather an outcome of the way the employment rate is calculated and the idiosyncrasies of Jewish employment patterns. Overall, we can conclude that the employment rate fell for both groups following the onset of the pandemic, but in proportionate terms, the decline was larger for the general population than for Jews.

Meanwhile the Jewish unemployment rate, which prior to the pandemic was lower than the general unemployment rate, almost doubled in the first five months, *overtaking* that of the general population. That said, Jews were still less likely to be put on furlough than in general, and high furlough levels artificially depress the unemployment rate. Regardless, by July 2020 the proportion of Jews in employment had declined by five percentage points, with a concomitant rise in the proportion of Jews on paid leave (including furlough). Interestingly, while the employment rate declined among all groups, including Jewish men, it *increased* among Jewish women. However, Jewish women were more likely to be furloughed than Jewish men, a gendered pattern also noted in the general population, though much less pronounced.

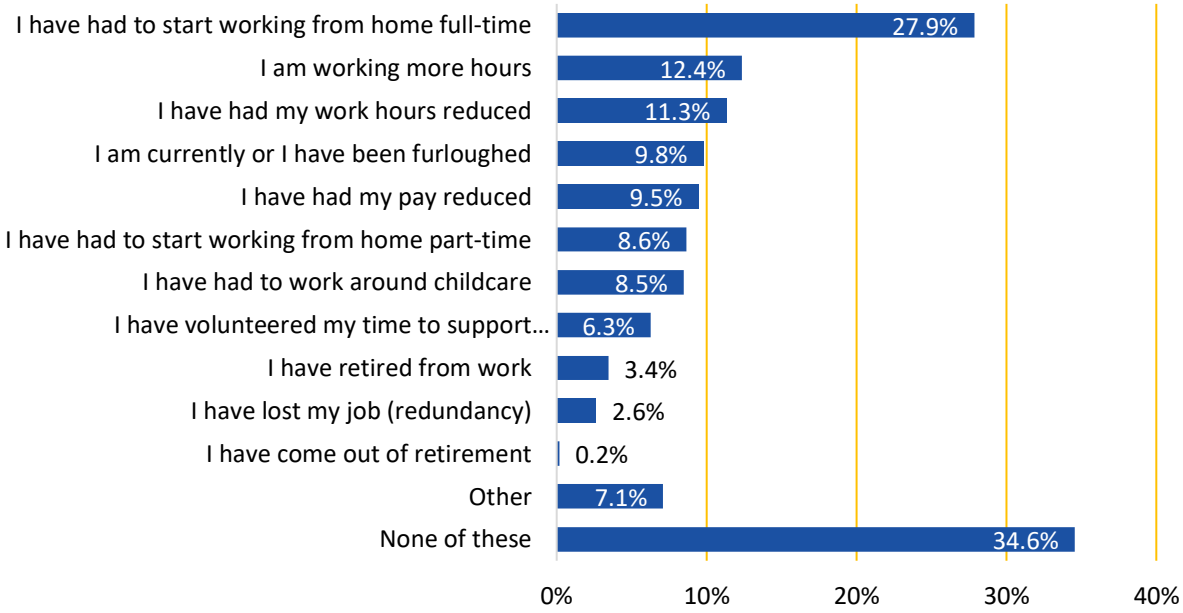
[5] HM Revenue & Customs, ibid.

## 3 / Change in work conditions and circumstances

Having examined changes in employment status in the previous section, we now move the focus to understand shifts in Jewish people's work circumstances and conditions. Even if someone remained in employment during the entire five month period examined, aspects of their circumstances may nevertheless have changed. In Figure 2 we show the extent to which respondents' work circumstances changed and how.

Looking across the entire adult Jewish population aged 16 plus, the most common change was starting to work from home either full-time (27.9%) or part-time (8.6%). Almost as many saw their work hours increase (12.4%) as decrease (11.3%). Close to one in ten (8.5%) said they now had to organise their work around childcare duties. Overall, just over a third (34.6%) of respondents said they did not experience any of these changes during this period (many of these are retirees), but most experienced either one (38%) or more (27%) changes to their work circumstances.

**Figure 2. Changes to working conditions and circumstances among UK Jews aged 16 and above between February and July 2020 (n=6984)**




*Question: Which, if any, of the following work-related events has happened to you as a result of the coronavirus outbreak?* [Response options as shown on chart].

Over this period, 2.6% reported being made redundant. This can be contrasted with the data on unemployment presented earlier (Table 3), which showed that in February 2020, 2.1% were unemployed but by July, that proportion had risen to 4.0%, a difference of 1.9 percentage points. The fact that a greater proportion (2.6%) said they experienced redundancy in this period indicates that at least a quarter had found a new job by July, reflecting the changing nature of employment. Similarly, 9.8% said they had been furloughed during this period, again, considerably higher than the 5.2% found to be on furlough or paid/unpaid leave in July (Table 2). This difference helps to convey the significant volatility occurring at this time: of all those who were furloughed at some point between the beginning of the pandemic and July 2020, about half no longer held this status by July.

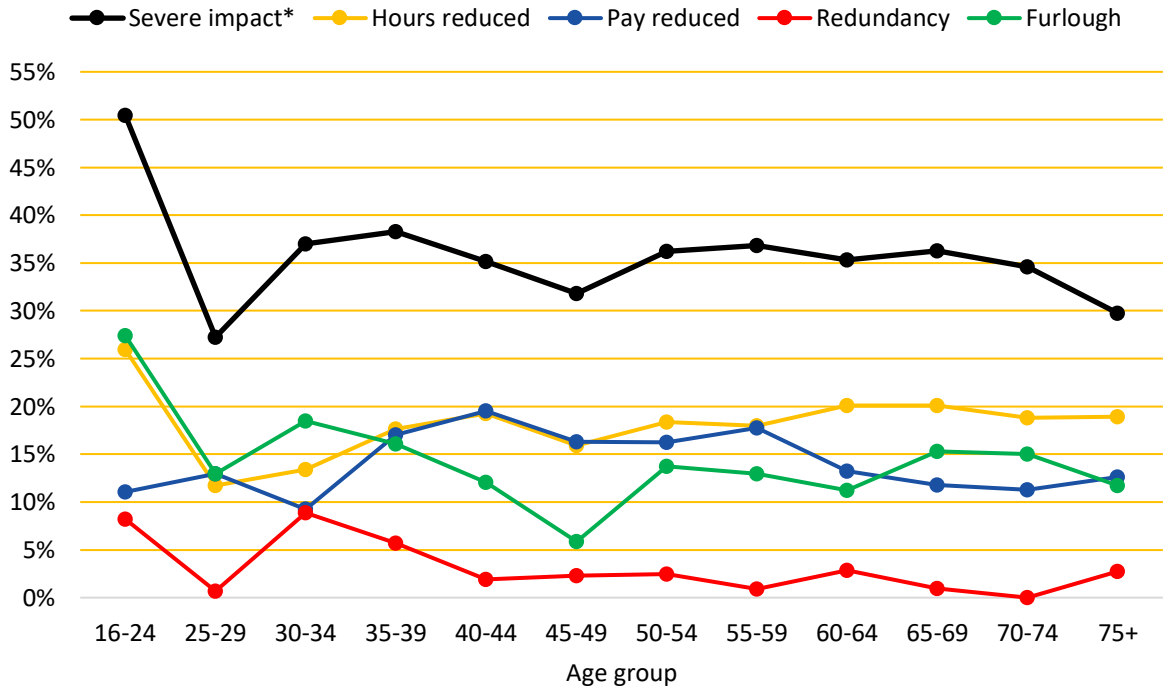
Although the dynamic nature of employment means that some experienced these changes for relatively short spells, in total, almost a quarter (24.2%) of the adult Jewish population reported a

particularly negative work experience – being made redundant, being furloughed, having their pay reduced, having their hours reduced – any one of which could have had a detrimental effect on their finances. In the next section we explore which groups were most likely to experience these more severe types of work disruption.

## 4 / The characteristics of those who experienced the most severe types of work disruption

Not everyone experienced work disruption between February and July 2020, and among those who did, the impact was not necessarily damaging to their household finances. Here we define a 'severe' disruption as one that is likely to have had a detrimental effect on household finances. The analysis below focuses on all Jewish people who were working (employed or self-employed) just prior to the pandemic, but who had experienced at least one of either reduced hours, reduced pay, redundancy or furlough, by the time of the survey in July 2020. This was the case for 36% of this group. Of key interest is whether we see any differences within this population: are certain sub-groups more likely to have experienced one or more of these severe work impacts than others, or are the patterns similar regardless of whom we look at?

**Figure 3. Whether Jews who were employed just prior to the pandemic experienced a severe work impact* in the first five months (to July 2020), by age group (n=3843)**

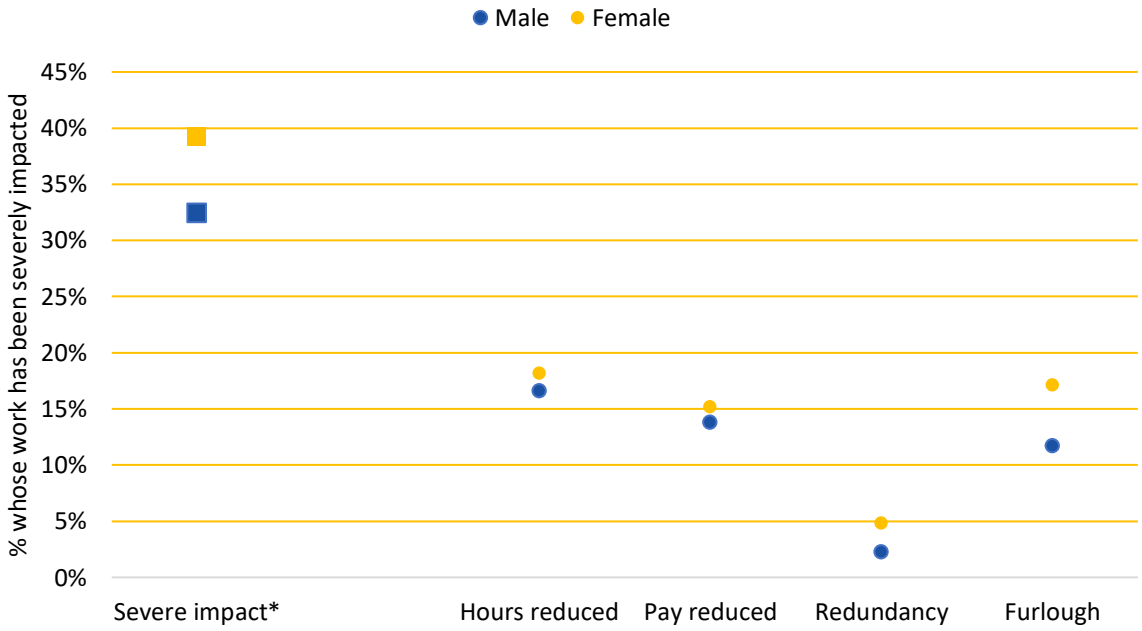



* Severe impact (black line) is anyone who was working in February 2020 but who experienced one or more of the following by July 2020: reduced hours, reduced pay, redundancy or furlough. The other lines show each of these component elements separately.

When we examine the data in terms of age, we see that the very youngest group – those aged 16-24 – was most severely impacted (Figure 3 above, black line). Half (50%) of this age group experienced at least one type of severe impact, compared with between 27% and 38% for all other age groups. In particular, 16-24 year-olds were most likely to have had their hours reduced (26%) and/or to have been furloughed (27%). Interestingly, the next youngest group, aged 25-29, seems to have been least

impacted by severe work interruptions. At this stage it is unclear exactly why we see such a big difference, but it may be related to work sector/role, qualifications and religiosity (the latter is explored separately below).[6] Beyond this, there is no clear pattern to the data.[7] However, those aged in their forties and fifties were least likely to be furloughed but most likely to have their pay reduced. We can only speculate about why this might be the case, but many employers are likely to have taken into consideration their employees' personal circumstances alongside the broader needs of the business.

**Figure 4. Whether Jews who were employed just prior to the pandemic experienced a severe work impact* in the first five months (to July 2020), by sex (n=3835)**



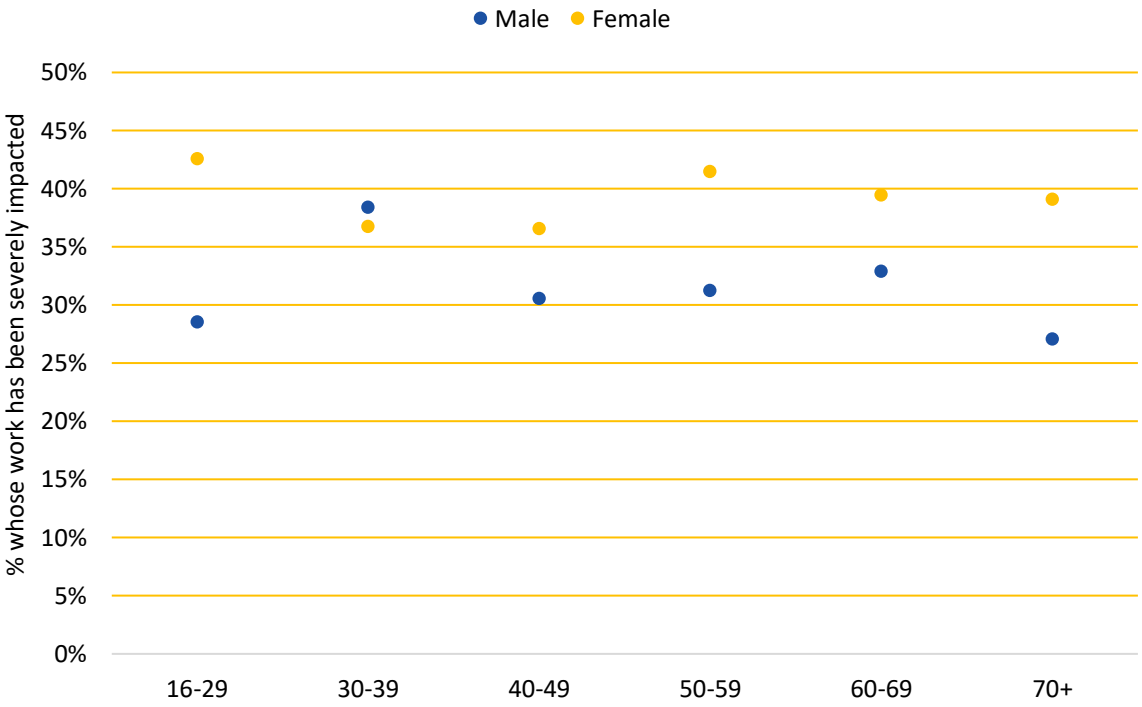

* This figure only shows severe impact, which is anyone who was working in February 2020 but who experienced one or more of the following by July 2020: reduced hours, reduced pay, redundancy or furlough.

As discussed above, another key factor when it comes to understanding employment is gender. Jewish women fared worse than Jewish men across all four indicators (Figure 4), but the gap is greatest with the most problematic changes: women were more than twice as likely to have experienced redundancy (5% versus 2% respectively), and considerably more likely to have been furloughed (17% versus 12% respectively). This is at least partly a result of women tending to work in more vulnerable jobs than men, that are more likely to be lower paid, part-time and temporary.

When we examine these two indicators (age and sex) together, we see that in every age group bar one – the thirties, where the difference is minimal – Jewish women are substantially more likely to have experienced a severe work impact than Jewish men (Figure 5). Without further investigation we can only hypothesise about why this age group differs, but at least part of the explanation is likely to lie in patterns of parenthood and gendered work patterns and career peaks.

[6] The survey did not enquire about work sector/role or qualifications on this occasion.
[7] There are, of course, confidence intervals around all these figures, and ongoing analysis of employment data is necessary to help to determine whether these trends persist.

**Figure 5. Whether Jews who were employed just prior to the pandemic experienced a severe work impact* in the first five months (to July 2020), by age and sex (n=3835)**



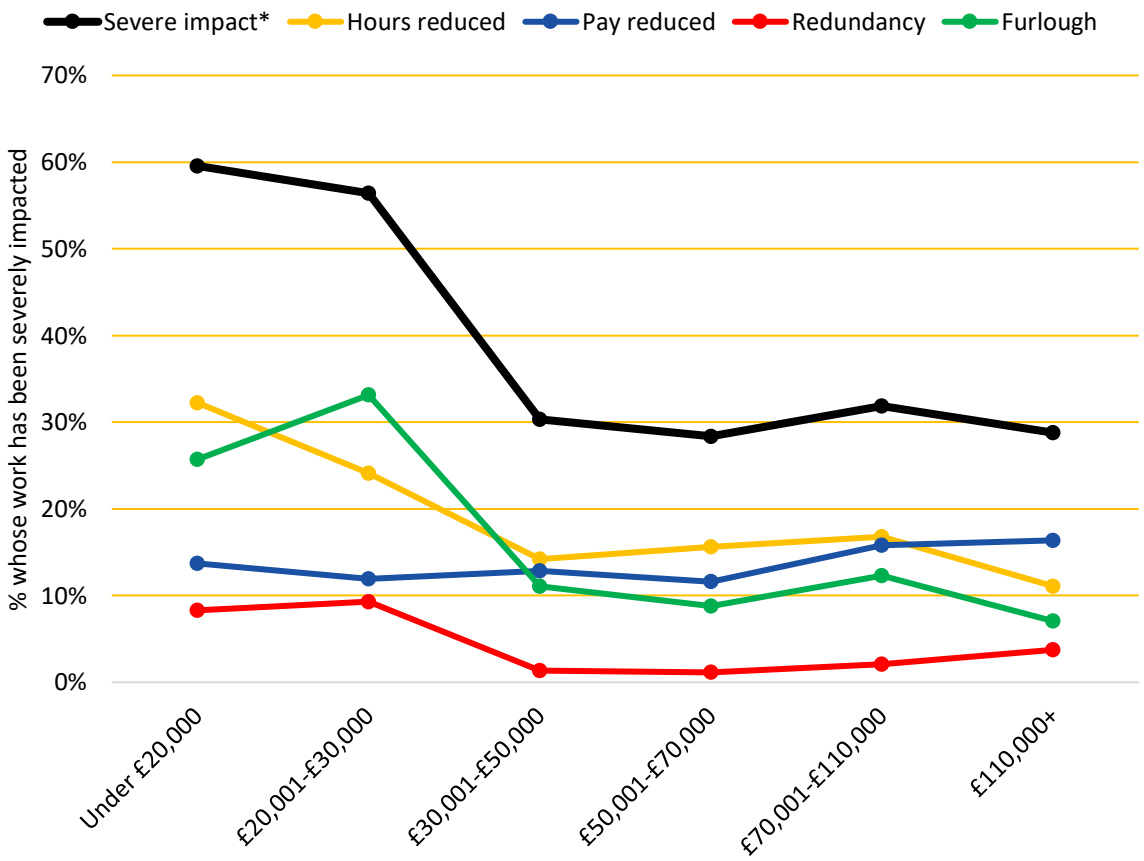

* Severe impact is anyone who was working in February 2020 but who experienced one or more of the following by July 2020: reduced hours, reduced pay, redundancy or furlough.

Another key variable worth examining is income. Here we plot gross (i.e. pre-tax) annual household income by each of the indicators of impact (Figure 6 below).[8] What stands out particularly clearly is that those who were employed just prior to the pandemic but whose household income was £30,000 or less were disproportionately impacted. Indeed, 56% of those with household incomes of between £20,000 and £30,000 were severely impacted, and this proportion rises even further, to 60%, when focusing on those with household incomes below £20,000. Looking at the factors individually, the only one that fails to follow this pattern is 'reduced pay,' where those on higher incomes are slightly more likely to have experienced pay cuts than those on the lowest incomes.

We also examined the data by household structure and found that single parent households were most likely to have experienced a severe work impact (45%),[9] but there was little difference between other household types. Disturbingly, further analysis demonstrates that single parents have been particularly vulnerable to being made redundant: one in thirteen (7.5%) of them reported this, compared to about 1% to 3% of other household groups. Single parents were likewise found to be particularly vulnerable to 'acute disadvantage' in an earlier report in this series.[10]

[8] The survey question asked for banded annual gross income in 2019; 24.1% of household informants did not know (3.9%) or preferred not to say (20.2%). The analysis is based on all other households.
[9] It should be borne in mind that single parent households are a very small part (2.4%) of the sample.
[10] See: Boyd, J., Lessof, C., and Graham, D. (2020). *Acute disadvantage: where are the needs greatest?* (Coronavirus paper 1.3). London: Institute for Jewish Policy Research.

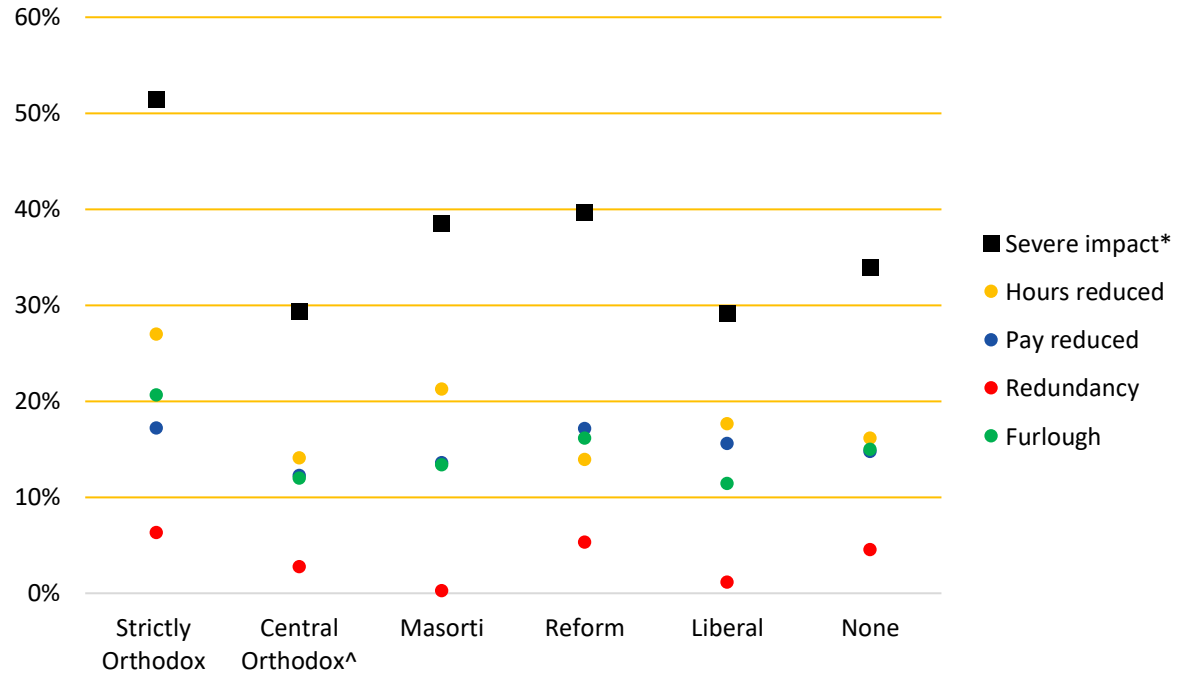
**Figure 6. Whether Jews who were employed just prior to the pandemic experienced a severe work impact* in the first five months (to July 2020), by gross household income in 2019 (n=2858)**




* Severe impact (black line) is anyone who was working in February 2020 but who experienced one or more of the following by July 2020: reduced hours, reduced pay, redundancy or furlough.
*Question: Which of the following best represents the annual gross income, from all sources, before tax and other deductions, of your entire household, for the year of 2019?*

Finally, we examine whether there is an association between severe work disruption and Jewish identity. While there does not appear to be a simple relationship between Jewish denominational alignment and work impact, it is evident that one group stands out – the Strictly Orthodox (see the black squares in Figure 7 below). Over half (52%) of Strictly Orthodox Jews who were working just prior to the coronavirus outbreak said that they experienced at least one severe work disruption. This is 12 percentage points more than the next group, Reform at 40%. Looking at the data more closely, we can see that Strictly Orthodox Jews were most likely to have had their hours reduced (27%), to have been furloughed (21%) or to have been made redundant (6%). They were also equal 'top' with Reform Jews regarding reduced pay at 17%. This is a striking finding, although it is important to remember that since the Strictly Orthodox community already has lower income rates and is likely to be younger than other Jewish community groups, this analysis reflects a number of the other patterns presented earlier. It may also reflect specific aspects of the Strictly Orthodox labour market, which may have been impacted by coronavirus in particular ways.

**Figure 7. Whether Jews who were employed just prior to the pandemic experienced a severe work impact* in the first five months (to July 2020), by Jewish denomination[§] (n=3843)**




* Severe impact (black squares) is defined here as anyone who was working in February 2020 but who experienced one or more of the following: reduced hours, reduced pay, redundancy or furlough.
[§] Denomination is based on combining responses based on synagogue membership with non-members who nevertheless reported the denomination they mostly closely aligned with.
^ Combines: United Synagogue, Federation of Synagogues, Other Independent and S&P Sephardi Community.
** None includes all those who did not belong to a synagogue and who, when asked, said they do not align with any denomination either.
Note that the proportions who have experienced reduced pay among the Central Orthodox (12%), Masorti (13%) and 'None' (15%) groups are the same as the proportions that have been furloughed in each case – the two markers are difficult to see in each instance as they overlap.

An examination of other identity variables also indicates that it was the most religious groups who were most severely impacted. For example, in terms of religious outlook (i.e. whether someone identifies as secular, somewhat secular, somewhat religious, or religious), 46% of self-defined 'religious' respondents reported a severe work disruption, compared with 27% to 36% for all others. Similarly, in terms of strength of religiosity (very strong, quite strong, quite weak, very weak), 49% of those who self-describe as having 'very strong' religiosity experienced a severe work disruption, compared with 32% to 37% for all others. In both cases, it is assumed that the data are being shaped by the Strictly Orthodox experience.

In summary, we can see that those most likely to have experienced a severe impact on their work commonly have several key characteristics. Focusing on the most severe impacts (redundancy and furloughing) and using multivariate analysis to determine which characteristics are the most important drivers identified, we find that these are: having a low income before the pandemic (having a gross household income of less than £30,000), being Strictly Orthodox, being relatively young (under 40), being a woman and having one or more children in the household. The picture is very similar if we narrow down further, focusing specifically on those who have been made redundant. In this instance, the most important factors are the following: those on incomes under £30,000 before the pandemic, women, Strictly Orthodox, those with children in the household, people aged 30-39 and

those living in more densely populated areas. It goes without saying that, of course, Jewish people across the spectrum have been affected, but statistically these are the characteristics most strongly associated.

## 6 / Summary and policy considerations

The profound effects of the pandemic on people's jobs and livelihoods have been the subject of almost continual analysis by official statistical bodies since its outset. But there has been a dearth of analysis about Jews specifically on this topic, and this report is designed to fill some of the existing gaps in knowledge. In truth, even before the pandemic, relatively little was known about key indicators of Jewish employment. Here we have shown that, at that time, the Jewish unemployment rate was lower than average but that somewhat paradoxically, the Jewish employment rate was also lower. Although this result may seem unexpected, it is because Jews tend to enter and leave the workforce later than average.

By July 2020, the pandemic had led to a decline in the employment rates and a rise in the unemployment rates, both among Jews and the wider population. However, importantly, the Jewish employment rate had declined at a lower rate than among the general population, but the Jewish unemployment rate had increased at a higher rate. Nevertheless, it is important to bear in mind that differences in employment patterns (such as the tendency among Jews to enter the workforce later than average, and the higher than average rates of self-employment among Jews) make it difficult to fully interpret these trends. However, whilst many Jews have experienced serious work impacts, and many among the high proportions of self-employed Jews have lost income without having the same access to government financial support as the employed,[11] it seems unlikely that the Jewish population *as a whole* has suffered disproportionately.

These are headline indicators. Yet the disruption to people's jobs goes far beyond these figures. The most common type of disruption, affecting over a quarter (28%) of Jewish adults by July 2020, was simply having to start working from home on a full-time basis. One in twenty (5.2%) reported being on paid or unpaid leave from work (including furlough) at this time, with Jewish women considerably more likely to be in this position than Jewish men. At the same time, whilst most of those who were unemployed before the pandemic's onset remained so in July, almost one in five had found work by that time. Among the self- employed, 22% were no longer working.

Overall, more than one in three (36%) Jews who were working or seeking work just prior to the pandemic had either been made redundant or furloughed, and/or had their pay or hours reduced in the months between February (i.e. pre-pandemic) and July 2020. We found that those who were most likely to experience this kind of severe work interruption were the youngest workers (aged 16-24), Jewish women (especially regarding furlough and redundancy), single parents, those with household incomes below £30,000 per year prior to the pandemic, and the most religious respondents, especially Strictly Orthodox workers, more than half of whom (52%) experienced one or more of these severe impacts.

Some data about working experiences were also captured in the form of narrative. These underlie what a stormy period this was for many people, with other kinds of disruption being noted, such as

[11] It is possible that this situation will improve somewhat following the UK Government announcement in March 2021 that the latest self-employment income support scheme (SEISS) is designed to reach 600,000 previously ineligible newly self-employed people.

the impact of increased childcare duties presenting a clear challenge for many. Some of these experiences can be read, verbatim, in the Appendix at the end of this report.

Ultimately, these findings relate to the first wave of the pandemic in Britain, up to July 2020. So much has happened in the months that have elapsed between the survey and the time of writing (March 2021) that it is clear that we need to gather more up to date information to look at how the situation has evolved subsequently. A follow-up survey planned for the coming months will determine how things have changed further since July among Jews, but it is already clear that communal investment in employment support is needed; all national indicators tell us that the employment situation has generally deteriorated yet more. While the furlough scheme has helped many, the self-employed have not benefited equally, and there is a great deal of continuing uncertainty and turbulence in the employment market. Considerable numbers of Jewish people may well need support in terms of finding new work, retraining, or building and rebuilding their own businesses, so that they are able to support themselves and their families. At the same time, it is important to note that the Jewish community relies on high employment rates to help maintain its communal infrastructure; reductions in household income due to work disruption or job insecurity will inevitably mean that some are no longer able to afford to continue to give to community organisations, synagogues and Jewish schools, all of which rely, to varying degrees, on regular membership payments or donations.[12]

Continued monitoring of Jewish employment rates is imperative to understand how the overall picture is changing and whether various endeavours being undertaken to address the challenges are effective. This will require a combination of continued investigations using data gathered within the community, as well as new investments in analysing and interpreting national data sources to shed light on long-term trends.

## Appendix / Qualitative findings on work disruption

In the JPR survey, respondents were invited to share in brief narrative form what had happened to them over the previous few months regarding their experiences in the workplace. We gathered hundreds of comments, ranging from acute concern, through more mild unease, to no significant work concerns at all. The following statements are simply a selection of those we received, but they convey the range of work experiences, impacts and stresses many British Jews had gone through by July 2020, and provide a more vivid personal sense of the impact of the pandemic.[13]

Among the most severely impacted are those who had lost their job, clients, or business, with the resultant negative and worrying impact on income.

**Job and income loss**

- "Lost job without redundancy. No idea if I will be employed again by the same people in the future."
- "I lost my job just before the pandemic and am not entitled for any scheme."
- "I am unable to find a job, unable to claim benefits because I am not eligible… I've got no money coming in whatsoever – I rely on a foodbank."
- "No work and no income now."

[12] See: Graham, D., Boyd, J. and Lessof, C. (2021). *Jewish community income: How is it being affected by the pandemic?* (Coronavirus paper 1.4). London: Institute for Jewish Policy Research.

[13] We have not implemented a rigorous methodological approach to this part of the analysis but rather, we have used what we have found in the quantitative analysis as the basis for grouping comments.

- "My spouse lost his job."
- "I am potentially going to lose my job."
- "I am under threat of redundancy due to the economic situation."

**Client and business loss**

- "I have temporarily closed my business."
- "My self-employment is on hold."
- "My freelance work has all but dried up."
- "I have lost clients and jobs."
- "I run my own business: my workload has massively gone up as our income has gone down."
- "I can't see clients at the moment."

**Impact of additional childcare responsibilities**

- "I cannot work due to childcare."
- "I have to work with no childcare for my infant child."
- "I have had to reduce my hours to accommodate childcare."
- "I have had to balance work with caring duties."

**Partial or temporary disruptions**

- "One of my roles stopped due to Covid, hence a big pay cut."
- "I have been temporarily out of work as lots of events for this year have been cancelled."
- "I stayed at home for over three months on full pay and returned to work four weeks ago on reduced hours but no reduction in pay."
- "I was furloughed and am now back at work."

Of course, the pandemic has affected working lives in many other ways. For some, this has been due to health issues (of the respondents themselves and/or those close to them); for others, it has been about delays in finding or starting work; for yet others, it has been about managing an increased, or reduced, workload. At the same time, some have re-entered the workforce, either in a professional or voluntary capacity, including joining or re-joining the medical workforce. Beyond all of this volatility, it is also worth noting that some of the luckiest have experienced little to no disruption at all. Among the comments we received along each of these lines were the following:

- "I am currently on sick leave."
- "My workload has increased significantly due to other colleagues either self-isolating or falling ill."
- "I have not been able to start my new job."
- "Job seeking has been much harder."
- "My annual pay rise was cancelled."
- "I am starting my own business in a new sector."
- "I volunteered to return to the NHS as a doctor."
- "No change, just all meetings online now."

## / Methodological note

These results are based on an online survey of Jewish people aged 16 and over living in the UK, carried out in July 2020. A total of 6,984 individuals who took part are included in this analysis. They responded variously to emails and e-newsletters sent out by a wide range of Jewish communal organisations and synagogues, or to messaging through social media, word of mouth, or referrals from other survey participants. Five £100 shopping vouchers were offered as an incentive.

The questionnaire was developed by JPR, drawing on a range of existing surveys, including some newly created to respond to COVID-19. It was programmed in-house using Confirmit software and formed part of a wider panel recruitment process. Except for a handful of individuals who requested telephone interviews, the survey was completed online, by computer, smartphone or tablet, from 9-31 July 2020, including a short piloting process. The median time taken to complete the survey was 25 minutes.

The survey data were cleaned and weighted to adjust for the age, sex, religious affiliation/denomination and geographical profile of the Jewish community in the UK based on 2011 Census data. Statistical analysis was carried out using IBM SPSS Version 26, and the text in this report focuses wherever possible on findings which are statistically significant. A more detailed methodological report will be available at www.jpr.org.uk.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## / About the Institute for Jewish Policy Research (JPR)

The Institute for Jewish Policy Research (JPR) is a London-based research organisation, consultancy and think-tank. It aims to advance the prospects of Jewish communities in the United Kingdom and across Europe by conducting research and informing policy development in dialogue with those best placed to positively influence Jewish life. Web: www.jpr.org.uk.

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