



2021

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# EMPLOYMENT

## DURING COVID-19

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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# INTRODUCTION

As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, many New Yorkers have lost their jobs or experienced changes in their working conditions and incomes. Especially at the start of the pandemic, lockdown mandates and other measures caused employers to close businesses and layoff or furlough workers. Past research has shown

that unemployment has adverse effects on material well-being and mental health.<sup>1</sup> As part of the UJA Covid-19 Impact Survey, we asked questions about this critical topic and analyzed patterns in employment and job situations by geography and key demographics.

The report focuses on four main areas:

1 Overall Employment

2 Impact of the Pandemic  
On Job Situations

3 Reasons for Job Change  
During the Pandemic

4 Relationship of  
Unemployment to  
Other Issue Areas

## Study Methodology and Defining Jewish Households

The UJA Covid-19 Impact Study collected information from a **representative sample of 4,400 New York area adults** who are Jewish or living in a household with one or more Jewish adults to learn more about the ways the coronavirus pandemic has affected the lives and livelihoods of the Jewish community. The broad coverage area included the **five New York City boroughs, as well as Nassau, Suffolk, and Westchester counties**. To learn more about the methodology, you can read our [\*\*brief\*\*](#) or [\*\*detailed methodology report\*\*](#).

This study aims to understand the impact of Covid-19 on **all members of the Jewish community**, across all — and regardless of — levels of observance, religious belief, and belonging to Jewish communal organizations.

This study relies on an **expansive definition of who is a Jew** by considering anyone who identifies as a Jew or lives with a self-identified Jew as a member of the Jewish community. For the purposes of this study, a Jewish adult is defined as someone aged 18 and over who self-identifies as Jewish or partially Jewish, either religiously, ethnically, culturally, or because of family background. This study counts those respondents who identify religiously with both Judaism and another religion, such as Christianity or Buddhism, as Jewish respondents. A household is defined as a Jewish household if it includes one or more Jewish adults ages 18 and over. To learn more about this, please visit our report [\*\*“Who counts as Jewish in the survey.”\*\*](#)

# KEY FINDINGS

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## 1 The unemployment rate of adults in Jewish households is 12%, compared to 10% of the general population

The *unemployment rate* is the percentage of all adults who are in the labor force and who are currently not employed but would be willing and able to work.

## 2 LGBTQ adults face a notably high unemployment rate

One in five LGBTQ adults in Jewish households is unemployed, while the rate for the non-LGBTQ population is almost half that (11%).

## 3 The Covid-19 pandemic has had a substantial impact on employment of adults in the Jewish community

More than two-thirds of adults in Jewish households report their jobs have been affected by the pandemic in some way. Most notably, 1 in 5 respondents experienced decreased income, wages, or hours due to the pandemic.

## 4 Unemployed adults experience a range of adverse outcomes

Compared to employed adults, the unemployed experience poverty, food and housing insecurity, mental health problems, social isolation, and substance abuse at higher rates.

## How Unemployment Was Measured

The unemployment rate is calculated based on questions from the Current Population Survey (CPS). The CPS, sponsored by the U.S. Census Bureau and the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), is the primary source for labor force statistics in the U.S. Employment status is defined as follows:

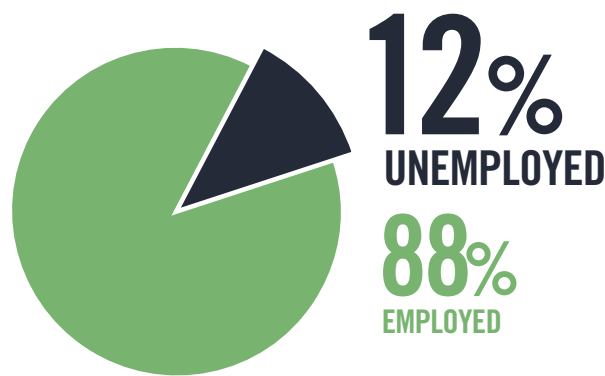
- People with jobs are *employed*.
- People who are jobless, actively looking for a job, and available for work are *unemployed*.
- The *labor force* is composed of the *employed* plus the *unemployed*.
- Retirees, homemakers, many disabled workers, most students, etc. are *not in the labor force*.

The unemployment rate is then calculated as the number of unemployed persons divided by all persons in the labor force.

Using a multiple imputation strategy, missing values on this variable are imputed based on respondents' age, education, sex, and race/ethnicity.

# OVERALL UNEMPLOYMENT

FIGURE 1. Unemployment Rate



This survey found that, among all adults in Jewish households in the eight-county area, **31% are not in the labor force**; that is to say, they are neither employed nor unemployed (e.g., retirees, homemakers, many disabled workers, most students, etc.).

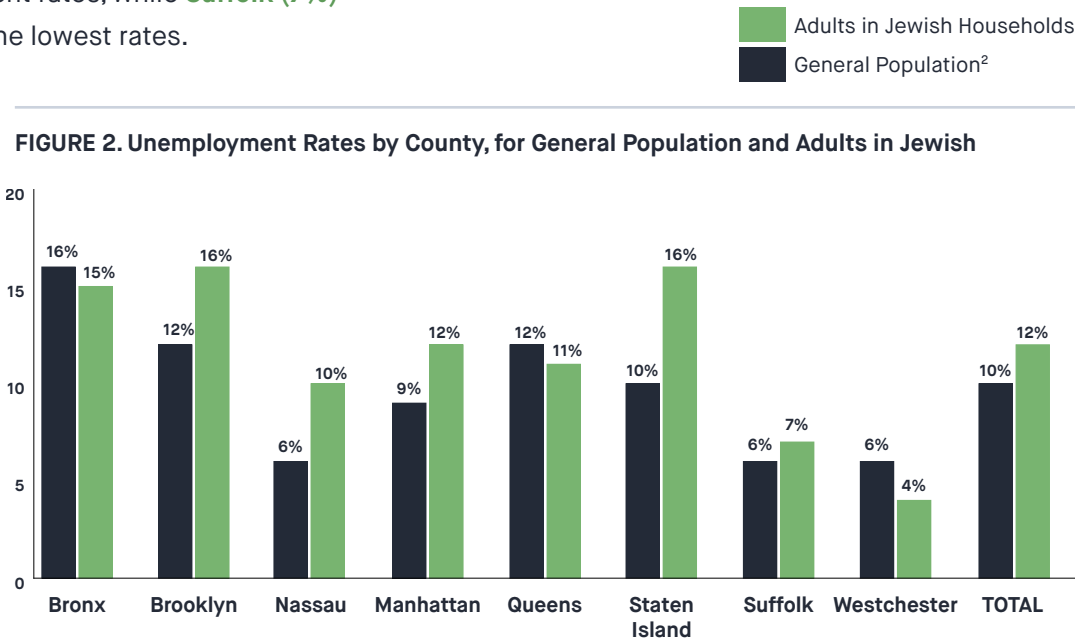
Among those *in the labor force*, the **unemployment rate in Jewish households is 12%.**

## Regional Differences

On average, **New York City counties have higher unemployment rates (14%) than suburban counties (8%).**

**Brooklyn (16%), Staten Island (16%), and the Bronx (15%)** have the highest unemployment rates, while **Suffolk (7%)** and **Westchester (4%)** have the lowest rates.

In general, unemployment rates in the **general population are similar to rates for adults in Jewish households**, with two notable exceptions: In Brooklyn and Staten Island, unemployment rates are higher in the Jewish community.



SECTION 1: OVERALL UNEMPLOYMENT

At the neighborhood level, **Coney Island/Brighton Beach/Sheepshead Bay (27%)** and **Flatbush/Midwood/Kensington (24%)** have the highest unemployment rates, while the unemployment rates in the Rockaways/Five Towns (5%) and Lower Manhattan East (3%) are the lowest.

During the pandemic, the unemployment rate for adults in Jewish households with a **high school degree or less was more than twice the unemployment rate for adults with a bachelor’s degree or more.**<sup>3</sup> A high percentage of adults in Coney Island (28%) and Flatbush (33%) have a high school degree or less, compared to the Rockaways/Five Towns (15%) and Lower Manhattan West (6%).

FIGURE 3. Unemployment Rates by Neighborhood\*

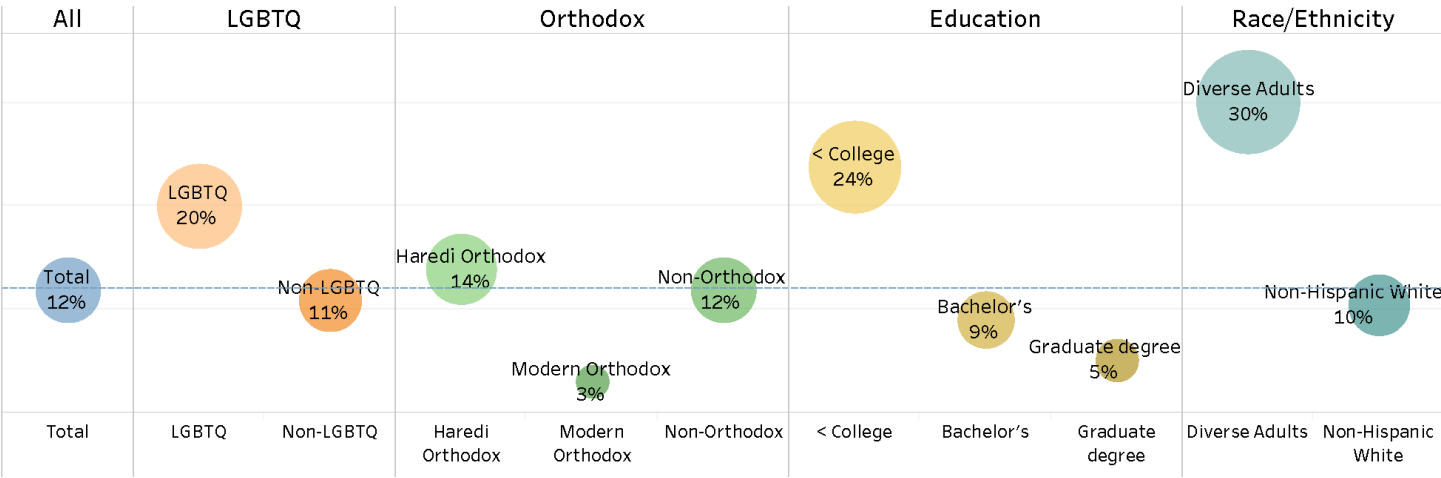
Neighborhood name	Unemployment rate
Coney Island/Brighton Beach/Sheepshead Bay	27%
Flatbush/Midwood/Kensington	24%
Upper West Side	15%
Upper East Side	14%
Williamsburg	13%
Brownstone Brooklyn	12%
Lower Manhattan West	9%
The Rockaways/Five Towns	5%
Lower Manhattan East	3%

\*We present unemployment rates only for those nine neighborhoods with sufficient sample size (≥ 100).

Social and Demographic Patterns

The unemployment rate is higher for three groups of adults in Jewish households than for the overall Jewish population: **adults with low levels of education, adults who identify as LGBTQ, and diverse adults (who identify as Black, Asian, Hispanic, multiracial, or other diverse races).**

FIGURE 4. % of Unemployed Adults in Jewish Households



## SECTION 1: OVERALL UNEMPLOYMENT

The unemployment rate of **LGBTQ adults** is high. **One in five** LGBTQ adults is unemployed, while the rate for the non-LGBTQ population is only 11%. LGBTQ adults face discrimination, stigma, and lack of social support, all potential catalysts for job loss.

Adults who identify as Black, Asian, Hispanic, multiracial, or other diverse races face notably high levels of unemployment. For diverse adults, **almost one in three is unemployed (30%)**, three times as high as the non-Hispanic white population (10%). This reflects longstanding systemic inequities in education and employment for Hispanic and non-white adults in the U.S.

Data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics indicate that American **workers without a college degree have experienced more of an impact from the pandemic on their employment than those with a college degree**. Consistent with this finding, this survey found the unemployment rate of **adults with less than a college**

**education** to be **24%**. The unemployment rate of adults with a bachelor’s degree is much lower (9%) and declines to only 5% of adults with a graduate or professional degree.

While this survey found no significant difference between Orthodox and non-Orthodox adults in terms of unemployment rates (11% versus 12%), significant variation exists by type of Orthodoxy. About **14% of Haredi Orthodox adults are unemployed**, a rate four times higher than the Modern Orthodox (3%). However, contrary to the popular misconception, but consistent with the findings from the 2011 Jewish Community Study of New York, the Haredi are not unemployed at a higher rate than the rest of the Jewish population. As the authors of the 2011 Jewish Community Study of New York summarize, “another explanation for the low unemployment rates among the Orthodox entails the cohesiveness of the community and its ability to provide work opportunities for almost all of its members seeking work.”<sup>4</sup>

## Spotlight on Industry-Specific Unemployment Rates

Industry	Percent
Food Service	34%
Retail (grocery stores, hardware stores, etc.)	25%
Trades (construction workers, electricians, plumbers, etc.)	17%
Education or childcare	7%
Health care	7%
Government	7%
Human services organizations	6%

Our study findings show vast differences in unemployment rates by industry. Unemployment rates are highest in jobs in the food service sector and retail.



# IMPACT OF THE PANDEMIC ON JOB SITUATIONS

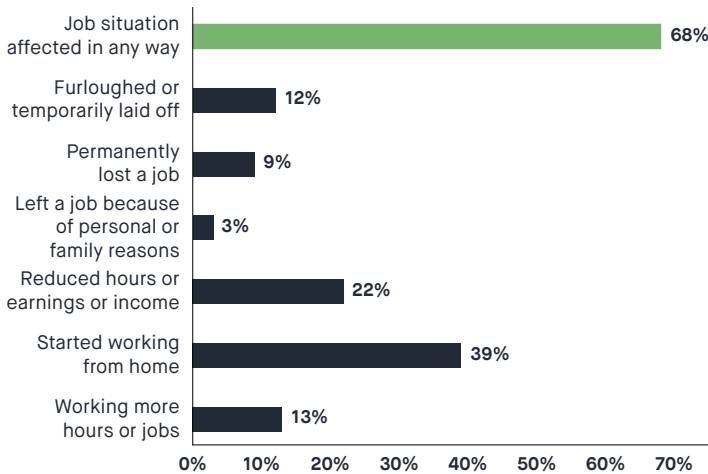
The Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the job situations of adults in Jewish households. About 68% of adults in Jewish households report having had their job affected by the pandemic in some way:

- 39% of adults started working from home
- 22% experienced reduced hours or earnings or income
- 13% have had to work more hours or jobs
- 12% were furloughed or temporarily laid off
- 9% have permanently lost their job
- 3% have left a job because of personal or family reasons

Different patterns emerge when the data are examined by industry. Almost 9 in 10 adults employed in the retail or food sector indicate they have experienced a change in their work situation.

The table below demonstrates that the high unemployment rates for the food industry (34%), trades (17%), and retail (25%) parallel the high rates of

FIGURE 5. Change in Job Situations due to the Pandemic



permanent layoffs and furloughs in these sectors. These industries were significantly impacted by the pandemic, and workers lost both jobs and income. Not surprisingly, adults who work in the food and retail industry were less likely to work from home than other adults.

FIGURE 6. Change in Job Situations due to the Pandemic by Industry

	Education/ childcare	Healthcare	Retail	Human services	Food	Government
Job affected by Covid-19	69%	66%	87%	69%	90%	72%
Furloughed or temporarily laid off	12%	8%	29%	9%	40%	13%
Permanently lost a job	9%	11%	30%	16%	29%	2%
Left a job because of personal or family reasons	7%	6%	5%	1%	2%	8%
Reduced hours, earnings, or income	23%	18%	36%	17%	43%	15%
Started working from home	43%	34%	28%	56%	16%	52%
Working more hours or more jobs	10%	24%	11%	18%	13%	14%

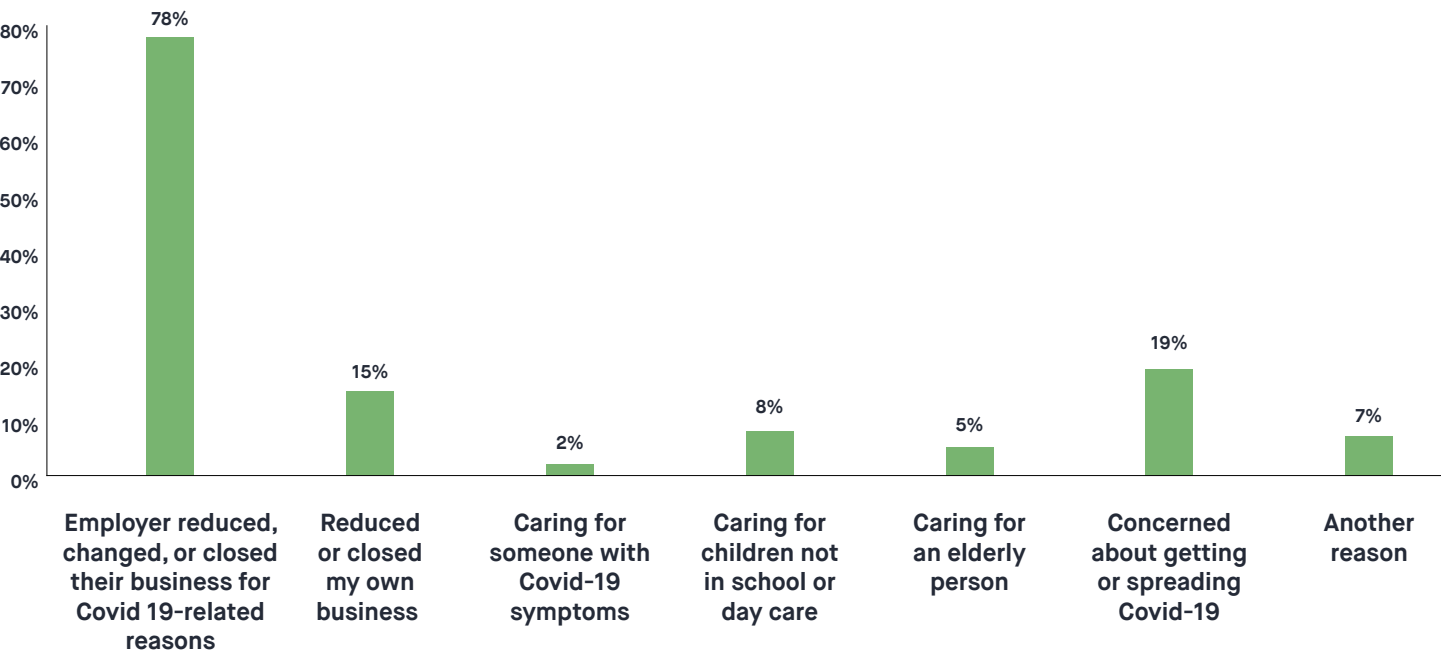


# REASONS FOR CHANGE IN JOB SITUATION DURING THE PANDEMIC

The survey asked respondents to provide a reason for their change in work situation. The most commonly reported reason was “employer reduced, changed, or closed their business for Covid-19-related reasons” (78%).

For adults who have experienced job change in any way, 19% attribute it to their own concerns about getting or spreading the virus. In addition, about 15% of adults report they had to change their jobs to care for someone with Covid-19 (someone with Covid symptoms, their children, or an elderly person).

FIGURE 7. Reasons for Job Change during the Pandemic



# RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN UNEMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL WELL-BEING

Unemployed adults face a host of social and economic struggles.

Not surprisingly, unemployed adults face significant financial and material hardships. More than a quarter of adults in Jewish households (27%) who are unemployed are living in poverty. This is nearly three times the rate for adults who are employed (10%).

Of the unemployed adults, 36% report they could not pay one or more bills, while only 11% of employed adults report such. Nearly one in six (14%) unemployed adults is behind on their mortgage or rent, compared to only 3% of employed adults. Adults who are unemployed are also more likely to face food insecurity (21%) than adults who are employed (7%).

In addition to these material hardships, unemployed adults also face emotional and social hardships. Around 35% of the unemployed adults in Jewish households report symptoms of depression or anxiety, while only 20% of employed adults report mental health issues.

FIGURE 8. % of Unemployed Adults in Jewish Households Who Suffer from Other Problems

Problem suffered	Unemployed	Employed
Living in poverty	27%	10%
Could not pay one or more bills	36%	11%
Behind on mortgage payments or rent	14%	3%
Sometimes or always run out of food	21%	7%
Anxiety or depression	35%	20%
Social isolation	63%	56%
Indicative of substance abuse problem	15%	12%

# NOTES

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1. McClelland, Alison. "Effects of unemployment on the family." (2000): 198-212.
2. Source: <https://statistics.labor.ny.gov/lslaus.shtm>. Results are three-month averages for February through April 2021 to parallel the UJA Covid-19 Impact Study time frame.
3. <https://www.bls.gov/opub/mlr/2020/beyond-bls/covid-19-educational-attainment-and-the-impact-on-american-workers.htm>
4. [https://www.jewishdatabank.org/content/upload/bjdb/597/C-NY-New\\_York-2011-Main\\_Report.pdf](https://www.jewishdatabank.org/content/upload/bjdb/597/C-NY-New_York-2011-Main_Report.pdf)