

UJA-FEDERATION OF NEW YORK RELEASES COVID-19 IMPACT STUDY

Study Provides First of Its Kind Data Showing How Jewish Community Has Been Affected During Pandemic in the Areas of: Poverty, Unemployment, Food and Housing Insecurity, Mental Health, Domestic Violence, and Substance Abuse

October 14th, 2021

NEW YORK CITY (October 14, 2021) -- UJA-Federation of New York today released the results of the UJA Covid-19 Impact Study, an examination of the social, economic, and emotional impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the New York Jewish community. Results show that the pandemic deeply changed the lives of Jewish New Yorkers, from losses in employment to declines in mental health. The study surveyed adults from a cross-sectional, representative sample of Jewish households in New York City, Nassau, Suffolk, and Westchester counties between February and May of 2021, and results will help guide philanthropic efforts to help meet the most pressing needs of New Yorkers.

Key Findings:

Poverty*

- **Nearly a quarter of (23%) of Jewish households are “poor” or “near poor”**
- **32% of poor and near poor Jewish households were unable to pay bills** (for example, rent, utility, medical)
- **Nearly 1 in 6 adults in Jewish households experienced a worsening of their financial situation due to the pandemic**
- **Brooklyn represents the highest levels of Jewish poverty, with 37% of households poor or near poor**

**A household whose annual income is less than 150% of the federal poverty level is classified as a poor household; a household whose annual income is between 150-250% of the federal poverty guideline is classified as near poor*

Unemployment*

- **The unemployment rate for adults in Jewish households is 12%, compared with 10% in the overall population***
- **Change in employment situation: 22% of adults in Jewish households have faced reduced hours or income, 8% have been laid off, and 12% have been furloughed**

**Comparisons to the overall population are based on Department of Labor Statistics from the same period as the study*

Food Insecurity*

- **9% of adults in Jewish households are food insecure**
- **The highest concentration of food insecurity is in the Bronx (21%), followed by Brooklyn (13%)**
- **27% of adults classified as “near poor” report being food insecure, while only 16% of “poor” respondents report being food insecure**
 - The higher percentage in near-poor households likely reflects what is referred to as the “benefits cliff” – those classified as near poor often do not qualify for food benefit programs, which can leave them increasingly vulnerable to food insecurity and reinforces the critical importance of community-based food

centers

** Unprecedented government and philanthropic support have successfully reduced the rates of food and housing insecurity; however, as relief efforts subside, these rates are likely to rise.*

Housing Insecurity*

- **4% of adults in Jewish households are not up-to-date on rent or mortgage payments**
- **For renters, those behind in payments are highest in the Bronx (10%) and Brooklyn (8%)**

**It is believed that government funding for housing support lowered housing insecurity rates. However, as government interventions subside, rates are likely to increase.*

Mental Health

- **1 in 5 adults in Jewish households reports symptoms of anxiety and depression, and 1 in 5 has experienced more symptoms since the start of the pandemic**
- **New York City counties report a higher rate of anxiety and depression (23%) compared with the surrounding counties (16%)**
- **The groups more likely to experience mental health problems include the young (aged 18-34), non-whites, Hispanics, women, LGBTQ adults, the unemployed, those who have undergone a recent change in their job situation, and those with a small social network.**

Domestic Violence

- **4% of adults in Jewish households have experienced violence in their close relationships. One out of three who indicated a domestic violence problem reported that violence worsened during the pandemic**

Substance Abuse

- **1 in 10 adults in Jewish households indicates they have a substance abuse problem, and 72% of those respondents said it worsened during the pandemic**
- **86% who have indicated a problem have not sought and are not planning to seek help**
 - The number one reason given was they did not need help
- **The highest rates of substance abuse were found in Manhattan (14%), Queens (14%), and Westchester (13%)**

“This study sheds important light on the myriad ways Covid-19 has negatively impacted the lives of Jewish New Yorkers. It is also the first representative survey in the nation offering statistics about social isolation, mental health, domestic violence, and substance abuse in the Jewish community. There is no vaccine for poverty or hunger, and the effects of the pandemic will be felt in our community for years to come,” said Eric S. Goldstein, CEO, UJA-Federation of New York.

“In addition to geographic data, the study also provided evidence that racially and ethnically diverse groups and LGBTQ adults are particularly affected by the pandemic and disproportionately suffer from anxiety and depression, substance abuse, domestic violence, and, face new barriers in finding help,” said Annette Jacoby, study director and director of research and evaluation, UJA-Federation of New York.

The survey, which was conducted by the survey and market research firm SSRS, collected data from a sample of 4,400 New York area adults who live in a Jewish household. The U.S. Census is prohibited from asking questions about religion, so the UJA Covid-19 Impact Study is the prime source of information about the needs of the Jewish community in the current moment.