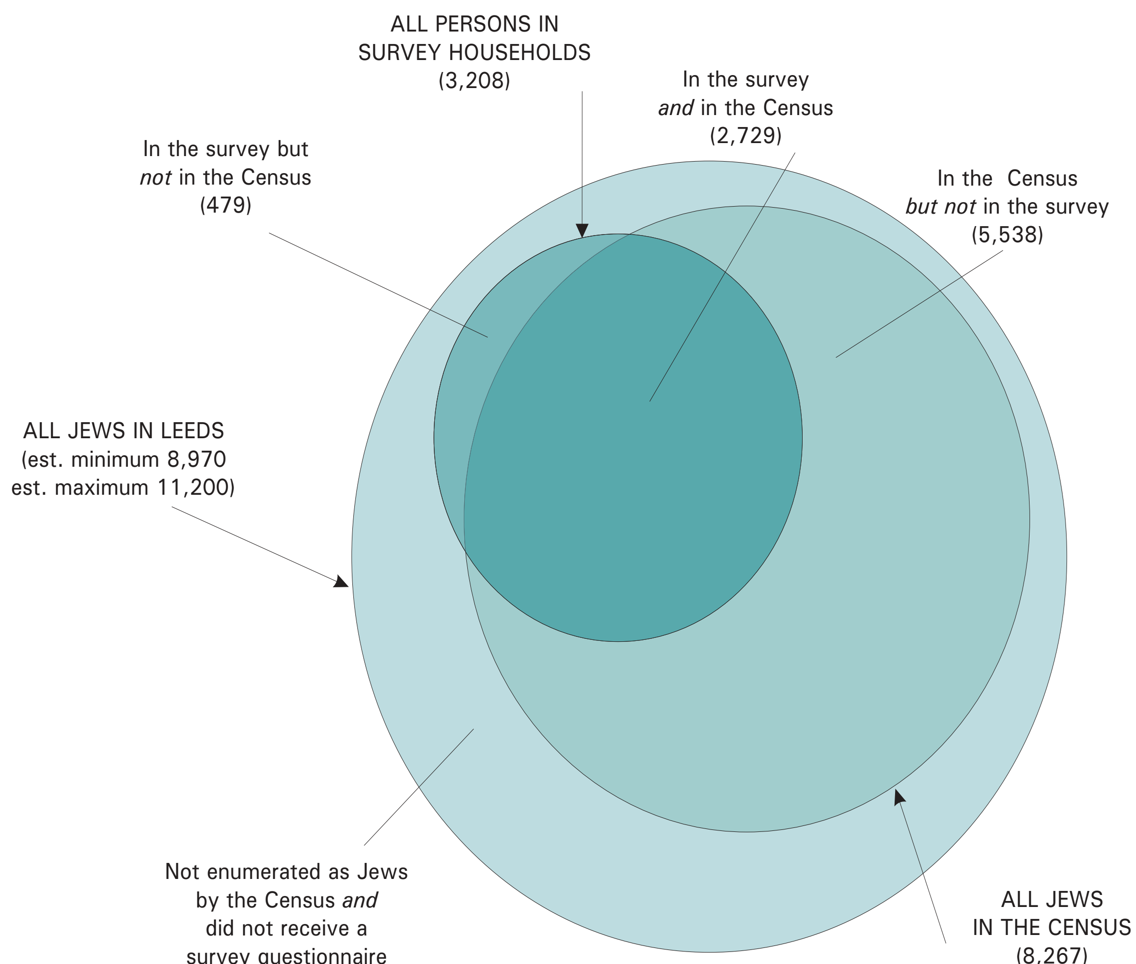
4 Conclusions

This short study based on the Leeds Jewish community survey has provided the opportunity for an invaluable exercise in comparative social research. At the time that the survey was being planned and prepared early in 2001, Census data were almost a decade old and of limited use in contributing to the drawing of a sample. By the time the survey had been completed and we were ready to prepare this report, results from the 2001 Census were becoming available, and for the first time we have been able to place survey results in the context of timely and detailed Census data.

This allowed us to compare the data collected as part of our survey of Jews in Leeds with data extracted from the Census relating to Jews in Leeds. This comparison allowed us to flesh out our findings. The Census provided social data for the whole population of England and Wales whereas the JPR survey provided some social data alongside unique material relating to the Jewish survey sample. The comparison was validated by the fact that the Census was conducted in April 2001 and and the survey was carried out approximately three months later. This was tantamount to their being simultaneous. Thus we were able to compare much of the social findings of the survey and, in the process, confirm much of the specifically Jewish data. Consequently, the exercise has been an opportune piece of social research.

Figure 6 illustrates four different types of Jewish populations that both the JPR survey and the Census attempted to reach. The first two of these groups can be quantified and, for the third, some quantifiable data can be provided. The fourth

Figure 6: Leeds Jews targeted by the survey (July–August 2001) and the Census (April 2001)



group contains an unknown number. The vast majority (82 per cent) of the survey sample reported that they had stated in the Census that they were Jews by religion. The remaining 18 per cent of the sample comprised respondents who did not report their religion as 'Jewish' (i.e. they stated that they had no religion or entered another religion), who refused to answer the voluntary religion question or did not complete a Census form, who could not remember or who failed to answer the question posed by the survey. In addition, an unspecified number of people enumerated by the Census as Jews did not participate in the JPR survey—they refused, did not receive a questionnaire, forgot to return the questionnaire etc.—and, similarly, there was an equally unspecifiable number of Jews who were neither included in the JPR sample nor enumerated as Jews by religion in the Census.[28] All in all, 2,729 Jewish persons living in 1,227 Leeds households were enumerated both by the Census and the JPR survey three months later. This degree of correspondence, in which JPR gathered information on 33 per cent of Jews enumerated in the Census, validates and legitimates our survey results. It is worth noting that the propensity among survey respondents not to have stated 'Jewish by religion' in the Census rose sharply among those whose outlook was secular. This has considerable implications when estimating Jewish population undercounts in the Census and overall size.[29] All this strongly suggests that the Census figure of 8,267 Jews by religion in Leeds is an underestimate, and that a more reasonable figure would be possibly as high as 10,000.

This study describes the situation in which many medium-sized and smaller Anglo-Jewish communities find themselves at the beginning of the twenty-first century, one marked by a great effort to maintain overall support structures in the face of declining numbers and the increasing agedness of its constituent population. Although other smaller regional communities can learn from the state of affairs in Leeds, from the commonality that they share with Leeds, we should also be aware of the unique features of a Leeds community that ties fourth-generation Jewish Yorkshire-born individuals to communal structures that they have created and maintained over the past century or longer.

Compared with the Jewish population in London, surveyed just over half a year later, Jews in Leeds appeared to be more homogeneous, closely knit, residentially concentrated, older, less well off and less well educated, more 'traditional' and more 'communal', and less able to send their children to Jewish schools. On the other hand, there were several features that were held in common to a considerable extent by the Leeds and London Jewish respondents: there was a high propensity towards being married or widowed; they were not young; they were highly educated and tended to professional occupations; they prioritized Jewish charities; they were non-smokers and non-drinkers. There was also a clear under-utilization of people willing to undertake voluntary work or to do more than they were currently doing.

That the Leeds Jewish community might be straining does not mean that it is unable to cope. Perhaps because of the significance of the working-class dimension of its history and the need to create solutions for those less well off than others, Leeds is utilizing its resources admirably, probably better than other Jewish centres of similar size. The level of its provision of welfare services and social housing is good, and those services are well managed. Nevertheless, declining numbers and increasing proportions of older people in the population, alongside a changing environment for the voluntary sector in the United Kingdom, do not make the task ahead any easier.

In Leeds, the effects are making themselves plainly felt. There are smaller numbers and lower proportions of younger people to support the elderly, a shortfall that is quite conspicuous in the case of those in their twenties. Even among the middle-aged, many have emigrated from the community so that there is a substantial number of older people whose immediate family no longer lives in Leeds. The close geographical proximity of most of the Leeds Jews who remain—and their number, around 10,000, is still substantial—suggests that neighbours may take up some of the slack

28 It should be noted that the JPR survey under-sampled renters (including the poor, people in social housing, young singles and couples), an outcome that was almost inevitable. It also did not reach the large Jewish student population of Leeds, numbering 1,014.

29 Evidence from London and Manchester, where there are substantial numbers of strictly Orthodox Jews, shows very high levels of non-response to the Census religion question. Only very small numbers of strictly Orthodox (ultra-Orthodox or Haredi Jews) were found in Leeds.

created by the increasing absence of immediate family. The responses to the question on emergency reaction time indicated that most older people could be reached very quickly in a crisis.

In the coming years, there will be an increasing need for volunteers in the community. Voluntary work is widely undertaken in Leeds, though there is room for improvement. There are indications of a sizeable group of people, who appear to be mostly middle-aged and who describe themselves as secular, who have stated a willingness to do more voluntary work than they currently do. There are others who currently do no voluntary work at all but who are prepared to do so. These groups, with time to spare and the willingness to volunteer, need to be actively sought out and recruited. Therefore, not only is it necessary to make more efficient use of those who already give of their time but also to identify and bring in others. It is up to social service providers to locate these individuals (this report only identifies them as a group) and tap into this valuable human resource, matching it with organizations and individuals in need. Ways will need to be worked out to increase awareness in this regard. The student body in Leeds is also of considerable interest. Although as individuals the vast majority of students are only resident in the city for three years, this large body of Jewish students is a permanent fixture, and should be regarded as an ongoing resource for the community.

Since many older Jews in Leeds have working-class backgrounds, they lack any pension provision other than the state pension. This fact clearly has significant implications for the capacity of these individuals to pay for social care services. A consequence of this is that the Jewish voluntary sector will continue to have a major role to play in the future. Moreover, the relatively large proportion of older respondents who indicated a preference for sheltered housing—and who said that their next move would most likely be to sheltered housing—will place a further burden on the community and its financial and physical resources. This situation is unlikely to improve, and the community's economic burden in the coming years can only become heavier.

Thus, the principal conclusion here is that there will be a greater responsibility than before on planners, decision-makers, major contributors to charities and, indeed, ordinary people to become aware of these issues, and to take and support decisions based on dispassionate analyses of relevant social, economic and financial data. An important policy implication of the analysis of charitable donations is that strategic planning in the areas of fundraising and priority-setting will involve influencing the small number of people who provide most of the money. That there is an apparent under-exploitation of volunteers and that there is still an untapped reservoir of people willing to volunteer means that this increasingly important resource can yet be utilized more efficiently. Moreover, Leeds has a large, young, dynamic and politically active Jewish student body in its midst that can and should be regarded as a valuable asset. This, coupled with the fact that the Leeds Jewish community still maintains many traditional Jewish values, bodes well for the future.