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The Community Research Initiative:

*Data about
the community,
for the community*

About the Institute for Jewish Policy Research

JPR is the only independent research institute in Britain that specializes in the state of the contemporary Jewish community. It exists to understand who Jews in Britain are and what they feel, think and do, in order to help Jewish organizations plan more efficiently and effectively for the future.

Our research is deliberately policy-oriented. We collect and analyze data to ensure that Jewish community organizations have the statistics and information they need. The reports we produce are designed to put relevant facts, figures and analyses into the hands of those best placed to develop and shape community policy at every level.

JPR is also a Jewish think-tank specializing in contemporary Jewish affairs. It regularly convenes groups of policy-makers to help them develop their own thinking about some of the most important and challenging issues facing the Jewish community today.

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We know a great deal about our community from the research JPR has conducted in the past. We know how many Jews live in Britain, where they live, and with whom they live. We know where they were born, their health and ageing patterns, and their highest academic achievements. We know much about their attitudes towards Israel, whether they belong to a synagogue, their experience of anti-semitism and their patterns of charitable giving.

However, much of this information is outdated. The statistics we use today were gathered by JPR between 1996 and 2001, thanks to the foresight of community leaders active at that time. But much has changed since then: 9/11, 7/7, wars in Lebanon and Gaza, rising anti-semitism across Europe, a deep recession, and a whole range of societal changes as a result of technological advancements. These and many other factors have altered the nature of Jewish life in Britain, and we need to know more about how they have if we are to understand the implications for our community.

There is a clear thirst in the community for more up-to-date information. To help community leaders make decisions that will affect us all, they need reliable data upon which to base their projections and plans. It is time to produce high quality, up-to-date and accessible data about the issues that matter, with one overarching goal in mind: to build the most responsive, supportive and inspiring Jewish community we can.

2011: a unique opportunity

In March 2011, a national Census will be conducted across the UK. As with the last Census in 2001, it will include a question on religion containing the category 'Jewish'. This one inclusion will produce a vast and enormously valuable dataset – quite literally a census of the Jews in Britain. JPR plans to use the new Census data to paint an up-to-date portrait of the Jewish community, and, for the first time, to chart how the community has changed over the course of the last decade.

However, a national Census has its limitations. It cannot tell us anything about specific Jewish behaviours and attitudes – for example, where people go to synagogue, what Jewish welfare provision they desire, the extent to which they feel threatened by antisemitism, or why they choose – or don't choose – to send their children to a Jewish day school. There is no short cut to this type of data; we have to generate it ourselves.

We are therefore proposing to begin two major complementary research initiatives:

- An analysis of the data from the 2011 UK Census to assess what it tells us about Jews in Britain and how things have changed since 2001.
- A parallel Jewish identity study across the UK in 2011 to tell us about contemporary Jewish beliefs, attitudes, behaviours and concerns.

Used in tandem, data from the 2011 Census and the parallel JPR survey will allow us to create the richest and most in-depth analysis of Jews in Britain that has ever existed.

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Doing it right: research *about* the community *for* the community

The data, gathered and analyzed intelligently and cost-effectively, will help to prompt the right conversations and serve to develop the right policies.

This is far from being merely an academic exercise. Used well, the datasets will be an enormous asset to the community. Indeed, in constructing this initiative, we have remained steadfastly committed to our principle that JPR's research must be not only *about* the community, but *for* the community.

In addition to producing key contextual reports about Jews in Britain, we will be able to use the two datasets to create tailor-made reports for specific Jewish organizations. JPR will be able to produce a range of policy-oriented reports for Jewish charities, synagogues, day schools and media outlets, as well as businesses serving the Jewish community. These reports will access the data in ways that answer these organizations' specific questions, inform their future strategy and provide them with reliable information about the issues that matter most to them. Rather than individual communal bodies commissioning costly reports or deciding to forego research because it is simply too expensive, investment in these two datasets will allow JPR to produce policy-related reports that speak directly to organizational interests over the next few years.

Working in this way, we will ensure that the data, gathered and analyzed intelligently and cost-effectively, will help to prompt the right conversations that serve to develop the right policies.

The products JPR will produce

Over the next five years, JPR will generate a range of research reports. First, we will produce summary reports of JPR's survey, the 2011 Census, and the changes that have occurred since the 2001 Census. These will be invaluable reference guides for anybody interested in understanding the Jewish community in Britain today.

Second, JPR will produce a series of detailed reports, tailor-made for the Jewish community's largest charities and organizations. We will consult with the leaders of each of these bodies to establish their key strategic and planning issues. We will then produce bespoke reports that help them to answer their most pressing concerns.

Third, JPR will produce a series of shorter reports, tailor-made for smaller communal organizations, such as synagogues, day schools or charities. Again, JPR will consult with the relevant people in order to produce reports that cater for these organizations' strategic planning needs and interests.

The value of this work is immense. The reports we produce will be designed to significantly improve the quality of policy debate taking place around a wide range of communal board tables. The policies that will be subsequently developed should result in far more effective community work occurring across the country.

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Direct benefits: how this information will help you

A plethora of Jewish organizations across the UK will have accurate, nuanced, timely and relevant information at their fingertips.

To illustrate how this might work – the board members of an individual synagogue would benefit by being provided with answers to the following types of questions:

- How many Jewish people live within walking distance of your synagogue? How many are within a ten minute drive?
- What percentage of those people are not members of a synagogue? What is their religious outlook?
- How many live in mixed faith households?
- How many Jewish children are there in the area?
- How many attend Jewish schools?
- How many Israelis live locally?
- What is the average household income of Jewish people in the area?
- How many elderly Jewish people are there and how many rely on Jewish community care facilities?

Across the UK, a plethora of Jewish organizations – welfare charities, schools, synagogues, community centres, media outlets and businesses – will benefit enormously from this kind of data. Each will have at their fingertips accurate, nuanced, timely and relevant information that will increase their understanding of the communal realities that exist within their particular markets and locations. Organizations would be better placed than ever to help plan a range of activities – membership drives, fundraising initiatives, educational programmes and local care support work.

How will it work?

This initiative is a long-term project, but immediate action is required if it is to succeed. JPR's survey of Jewish identity and attitudes needs to be carefully planned right now in order for it to coincide with the national Census in March 2011. Since the Census data will not be available for analysis until autumn 2012, this will allow JPR sufficient time to produce summary reports from the survey before preparing the groundwork for the analysis of the Census itself.

Therefore, we see this as a long-term project comprised of four main phases taking place over six years.

- Phase One (Spring 2010 – Spring 2011): Construct and run the Jewish identity survey. UK population completes UK Census forms.
- Phase Two (Spring 2011 – Spring 2012): Analyze Jewish identity data and publish report.
- Phase Three (Autumn 2012 – Autumn 2013): 2011 Census data starts to become available. Draw it together with data from the JPR survey and produce relevant summary and sector-related reports.
- Phase Four (Autumn 2013 – End of 2015): Extend the analysis and produce tailor-made reports for specific organizations across the community.

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The costs and the benefits

When resources are scarce, it is more important than ever to ensure that the policies we develop are the right ones. JPR's research plans are designed to achieve just that.

In order for us to carry out this work, funds need to be invested in several key areas. Highly competent researchers need to be employed to build the identity survey, analyze the data and generate the reports. A campaign to publicize the 2011 Census should be run to explain its importance to the community. Tables of Census data need to be commissioned and bought from the Office for National Statistics. A partnership needs to be forged with the appropriate research agency capable of managing data collection. Reports need to be published and disseminated. Seminars need to be organized to help share the findings. An appropriate online facility needs to be developed to enable the data to be accessed by all who need it.

JPR estimates that this endeavour will cost an average of £200,000 per annum over the course of six years. This will provide the British Jewish community with, arguably, the most robust and financially efficient model of community research output in the Jewish world. We will be investing in high quality research for all, not just for those most able to afford it; and we will be framing it in ways that encourage community leaders to ask the most pressing questions and seek out the most compelling answers.

During economic downturns, investment in research is often treated as a luxury. However, research is vital if we are to use scarce resources efficiently and effectively. We need access to dependable facts and figures to plan for the future. We need to ensure that community policymakers base their decisions on objective data, rather than on subjective opinion. Indeed, when resources are scarce, it is more important than ever to ensure that the policies we develop are the right ones. JPR's research plans are designed to achieve just that.



Institute for Jewish Policy Research

Please help us

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