

The Season of our Joy: The celebration of Succot among UK Jews and how it compares to other Jewish High Holydays

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The JPR UK Jewish population research panel is designed to gather data on Jewish people's attitudes, beliefs, behaviours and preferences to help support planning across the community. In this paper, we draw on data from over 4,800 JPR research panel members who participated in our 2025 Jews in Uncertain Times Survey to explore how Jews in the UK celebrate Succot.

"All the native-born of Israel must dwell in booths, so that your descendants may know that I made the Israelites dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt"

(Leviticus 23:42)

/ Introduction

The Jewish holidays of Rosh Hashana, Yom Kippur and Succot form a nexus in the Jewish calendar. All held in the Hebrew month of Tishrei, which typically coincides with September/October, they begin with the reflective tone of the two High Holydays, Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, before moving into the more celebratory and joyous tone of Succot.

In late 2022, in our National Jewish Identity Survey, JPR asked a representative sample of Jews aged 16 and above living in the UK (N=4,891) a series of questions to understand better the breadth and depth of observance of Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur. The findings revealed that 74% of Jews observe Rosh Hashanah rituals at home, making it one of the most widely observed Jewish festivals. It also found that over half of the respondents (56%) said they fast on Yom Kippur every year.¹ Those findings can be found in the JPR report [*Shana Tova: The observance of Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur among Jews in the UK*](#), published in September 2024.

Standing in the glare of the major High Holy Days of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, Succot tends to be overlooked in social scientific studies of Jewish practice despite the plethora of iconic symbols and rituals associated with it. Overlooked no more: in June and July 2025, as part of the JPR Jews in Uncertain Times Survey, we asked our panel members if they usually celebrate the festival. Here for the first time, we present data showing that half of Jews in the UK celebrate Succot.

¹ Of the remainder, 14% fast some or most years, and 13% do not fast for health reasons. Only 18% were found to never fast.

/ What is Succot?

Succot (סוכות in Hebrew), the Jewish 'Festival of Booths (or Huts),' is an eight-day holiday in the Jewish Diaspora² starting on the 15th day of the Hebrew month of *Tishrei*. The name is a reference to the temporary dwellings the Israelites lived in following the Exodus from Egypt. It is known by several other names, such as Chag HaAsif, the 'Festival of Ingathering' or harvest festival, as well as "Z'man Simchateinu" or Season of our Joy, reflecting gratitude for the harvest and joy in community. As such, it stands in stark contrast to the solemn fast day of Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement), which occurs five days before Succot.

Succot is redolent with symbolic practices such as building a 'succah', or temporary hut, in back gardens or on balconies, with roofs made of palm branches or similar natural plant materials. It is customary to 'dwell' in the succah, eating all meals often with guests, in celebration. There is also the practice of waving the 'arba minim,' or the four species, representing the diversity of the Jewish People symbolically brought together in harmony. The arba minim consist of an 'etrog' (citron), a 'lulav' (palm branch), 'hadas' (myrtle), and 'aravah' (willow).

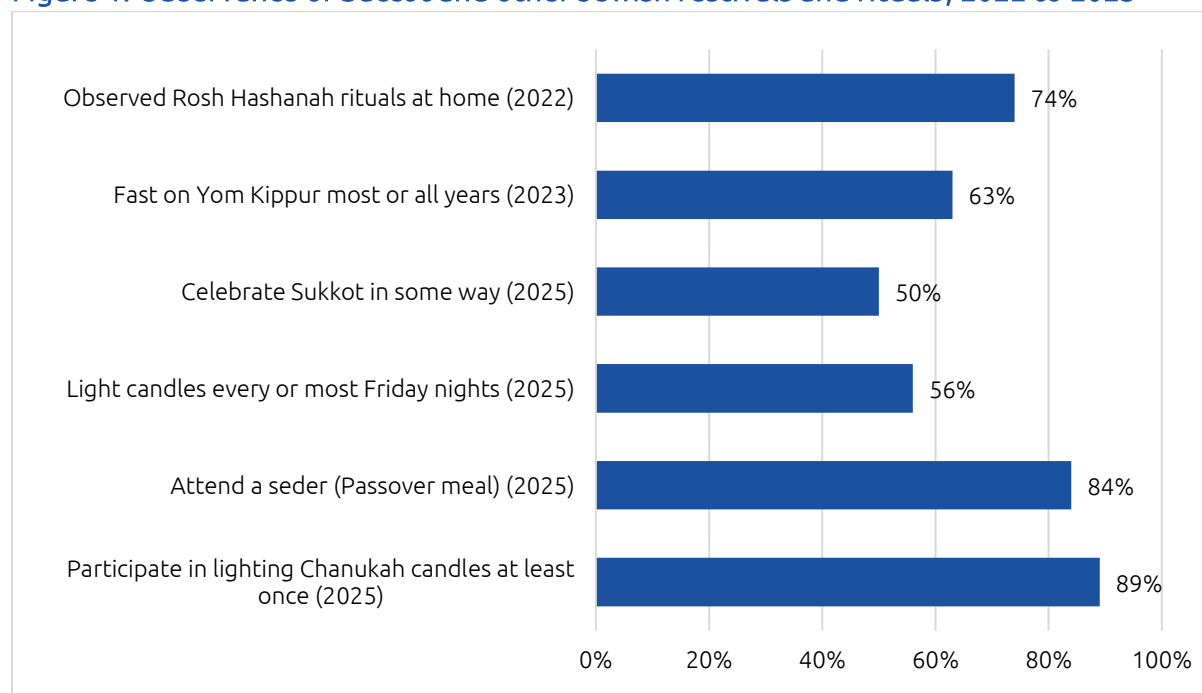
Most of the traditions associated with Succot are biblical commandments or 'mitzvot'. As one of the 'shalosh regalim', or three pilgrimage festivals, (the other two being Pesach (Passover) and Shavuot (Feast of Weeks)), historically, Jews were obligated to bring sacrificial offerings to the Temple in Jerusalem on Succot (Numbers 29:13; Deuteronomy 16:16). Today, tradition dictates that they are obligated to observe a day of rest on the first and eighth day (called 'Shemini Atzeret') of Succot (Leviticus 23:35-36), to dwell in the succah (Leviticus 23:42) and to take up a lulav (palm branch) and an etrog (citron) (Leviticus 23:40).

² In Israel it is celebrated for seven days.

/ Who celebrates Succot?

Our survey found that half (50%) of all respondents said they “Celebrate Succot in some way (e.g. attending synagogue, spending some time in a 'Succah' etc.).” Compared with the neighbouring High Holidays, Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, and with other Jewish festivals and practices, Succot is somewhat less commonly observed. For example, 89% of respondents participate in candle lighting at Chanukah, and 84% attend a seder meal at Pesach (Passover).³ Indeed, UK Jews are more likely to light Shabbat candles most or every Friday night (56%) than to celebrate Succot (50%). Still, it is celebrated by one in two adult Jews living in the UK today, and as we share in this report, some Jews are rather more likely than others to celebrate it.

Figure 1. Observance of Succot and other Jewish festivals and rituals, 2022 to 2025



- 2025 Question: And thinking about your Jewish practice over the last twelve months, did you: *Response options:* celebrate Succot in some way (e.g. attending synagogue, spending some time in a 'Sukkah' etc.), Attend a Friday night (Shabbat) meal every or most weeks; Light or observe Shabbat candles being lit in your home every or most Friday nights; Attend a seder (Passover meal); Light, or participate in the lighting of, Chanukah candles at least once;

- 2023 Question: Which of the following Jewish practices do you personally observe? *Response options:* Fast on Yom Kippur most or all years.

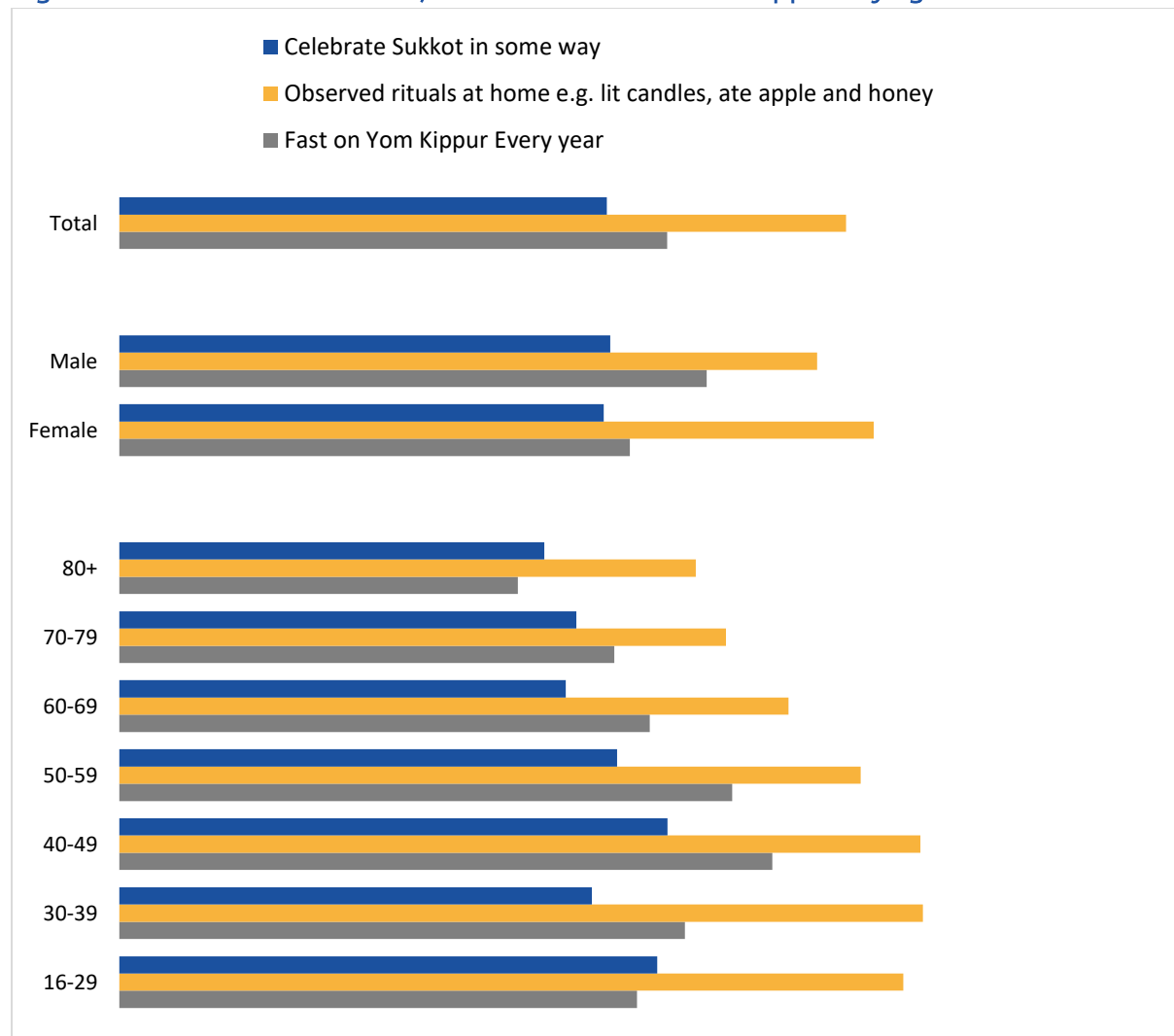
2022 Question: Thinking back to Rosh Hashanah in September (2022), did you do any of the following? *Response options included 'observed rituals at home e.g. lit candles, ate apple and honey'.⁴*

³ 2025 Question: And thinking about your Jewish practice over the last twelve months, did you: *Response options:* Attend a Friday night (Shabbat) meal every or most weeks; Light or observe Shabbat candles being lit in your home every or most Friday nights; Attend a seder (Passover meal); Light, or participate in the lighting of, Chanukah candles at least once;

⁴ Note: While COVID-19 restrictions had been fully lifted by the time Rosh Hashana was celebrated in September 2022, there were still some vestiges of concern from some community members, and online services and events were being held, especially by non-Orthodox Jewish communities. Therefore, the data may not be typical since Orthodox Jews would not have had this option unless they took place before or after the holiday itself (during which it would be prohibited).

In terms of age and sex, there is little to distinguish respondents when it comes to celebrating Succot (Figure 2). This, however, stands in contrast to the two major Jewish holidays immediately preceding Succot. On Rosh Hashana, women are more likely to observe home practices (light candles, eat apples and honey) than men, and on Yom Kippur, men are more likely than women to fast. And in terms of age, while those in their 40s are the most likely to observe any of these festivals, the clear peak for both Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur contrasts with Succot, for which age is a far less predictive factor.⁵

Figure 2. Observance of Succot, Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur* by age and sex

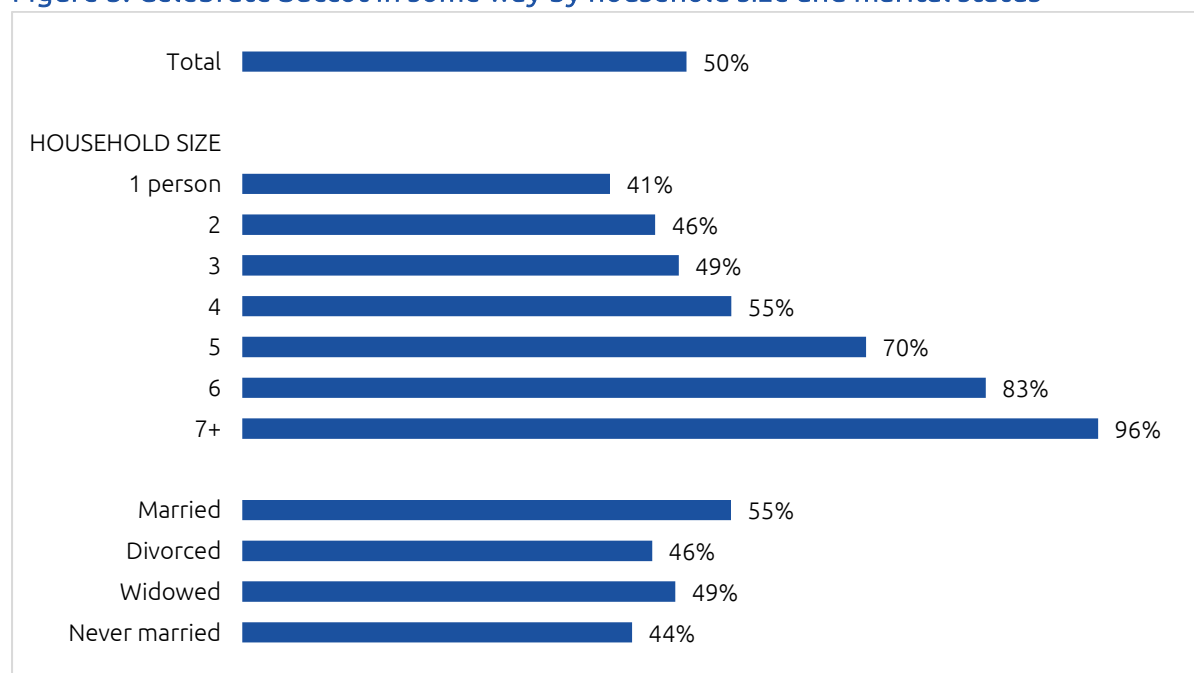


* Succot 2025; Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur 2022

Looking at other demographic variables, clearer patterns emerge. The larger the household size, the more likely it is that Succot is observed (Figure 3). It is also the case that married Jews are more likely to observe Succot than those who have never been married. Both of these indicate that Succot observance is more common among families.

⁵ For an overview of data on the High Holy Days of Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, see our previous [factsheet](#).

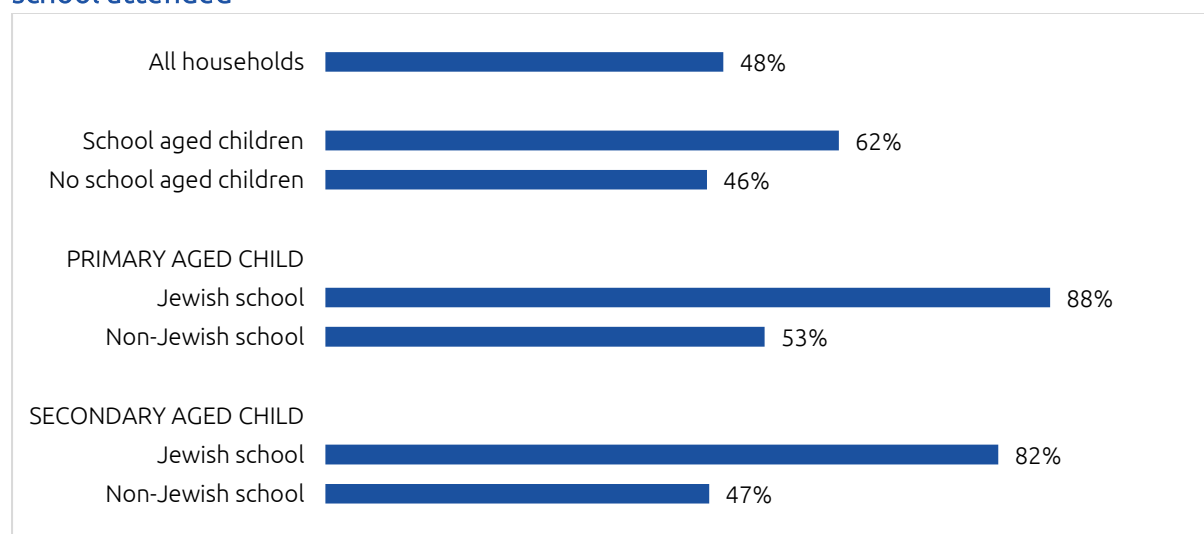
Figure 3. Celebrate Succot in some way by household size and marital status



N=1,746 households.

This is confirmed based on whether there are children in the household. Households with school-aged children at home are much more likely to celebrate Succot than households with no school-aged children at home (62% versus 46% respectively) (Figure 4). Further, just having school-aged children is not the only factor, as there is also a significant difference based on the type of school the children attend. Households that send their children to Jewish schools are almost twice as likely to celebrate Succot as households that send their children to non-Jewish schools. This indicates that household size and the presence of younger children at home are not the sole predictors of celebrating Succot, as it is closely related to one's level of Jewish engagement.

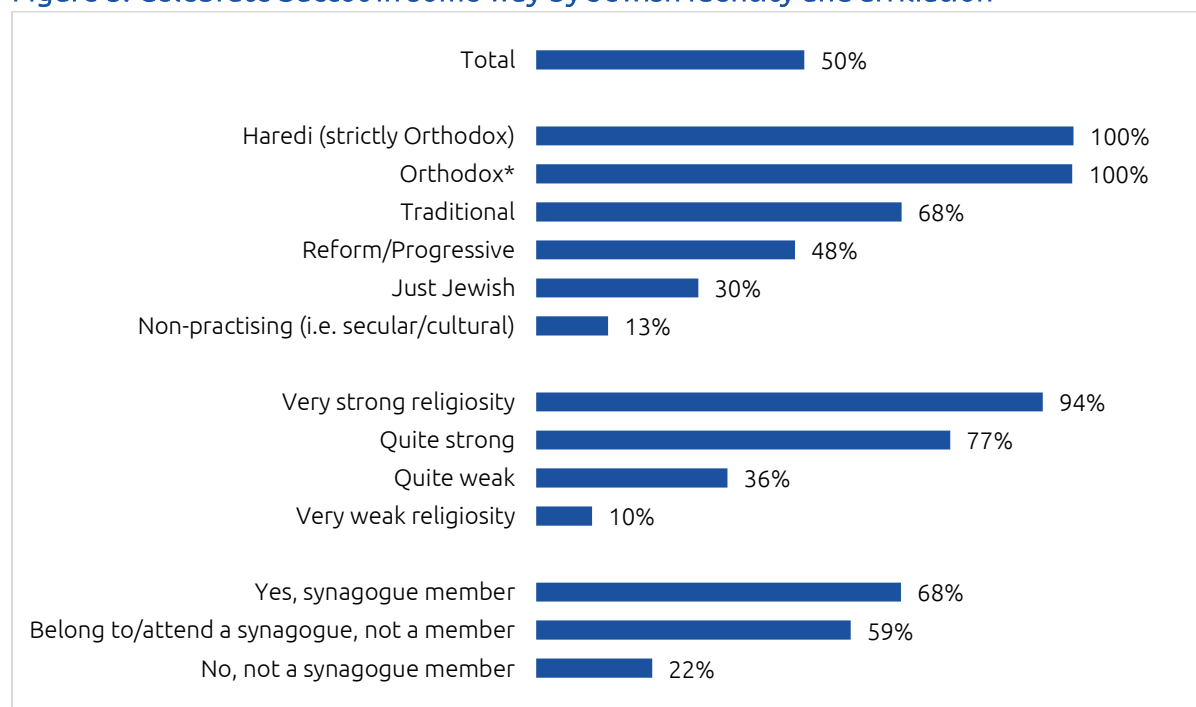
Figure 4. Celebrate Succot in some way by children in the household and the type of school attended



N=1,746 households.

In terms of Jewish denomination, there is a clear pattern demonstrating that more Orthodox Jews are more likely to celebrate Succot than less Orthodox Jews (Figure 5). Indeed, among haredi and Orthodox respondents, observance is universal, whereas among secular/cultural Jews, just 13% say they celebrate Succot in some way. Self-reported religiosity is similarly related. And while one in three (68%) synagogue members celebrates Succot, this is the case for just 22% of the unaffiliated group.

Figure 5. Celebrate Succot in some way by Jewish identity and affiliation



* N=4,822. Orthodox - e.g. would not turn on the light on Shabbat.

/ Concluding thoughts

In contrast to the more sombre tone of the High Holy Days of Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur and their themes of spiritual cleansing, Succot is more of a joyous, celebratory festival. Where Rosh Hashanah is the Day of Judgment and Yom Kippur is the Day of Atonement, in religious terms, Succot marks the spiritual completion of the High Holy Days and reconciliation with God, and is commonly referred to as *zman simchateinu* – the season of our joy. A festival steeped in ritual practice, Succot has many and varied meanings, such as the fleeting nature of life represented by the fragility of the succah, as well as the unity of the Jewish people represented by the 'arba minim', all bound together.

Here for the first time, we have shown data on the extent to which Jews in the UK celebrate Succot. We reveal that despite its uplifting themes, compared with the better-known festivals of Chanuka, Pesach, and Rosh Hashana, British Jews are far *less* likely to celebrate Succot. While half of all Jews do celebrate it, those who do are far more likely to be more religious and Jewishly engaged. Thus, unlike the more universally observed Jewish festivals, the celebration of Succot provides a clearer marker of stronger Jewish identity and broader engagement in Jewish life.

/ Methodological note

The data in this report are mainly drawn from the JPR 'Jews in Uncertain Times Survey' (June/July 2025), which took place as part of the seventh wave of the JPR Research Panel. The panel is designed to explore the attitudes and experiences of Jews in the UK on a range of issues in order to generate data to support planning both within and for the Jewish community.

The survey was completed online, on computers, smartphones or tablets, with a handful of individuals being interviewed by telephone. The final sample contained 4,822 responses. All respondents were UK residents aged 16 or above who self-identified as being Jewish in some way.

The survey data were cleaned and weighted to adjust for the age, sex and Jewish identity of the Jewish population of the UK, based on 2021 Census data and other administrative sources. All aspects of the panel and its constituent surveys are developed, implemented, analysed and reported in-house at JPR. The panel and its component surveys are delivered using specialist, secure software provided by Forsta, and ZK Analytics provides additional support for data management and weighting. The panel and survey data were analysed using SPSS, while weighting was carried out using R.

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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.

/ About the author

Dr David Graham is a Senior Research Fellow at JPR, an Honorary Associate at the Department of Hebrew, Biblical and Jewish Studies at the University of Sydney, and an Honorary Research Associate at the University of Cape Town. He holds a DPhil from the University of Oxford and has published widely for academic and general interest audiences.

A geographer by training and expert in the sociodemographic study of Jews in the UK, Australia and South Africa, his skills encompass statistical analysis, survey and questionnaire design, census data analysis and geographic information system mapping. Since joining the JPR team in 2009, Dr Graham has been involved in numerous studies of Jewish life and has undertaken work for several organisations, including the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Kaplan Centre at the University of Cape Town, Jewish Care, the Jewish Chronicle, UJIA, Pears Foundation, the Union of Jewish Students and JCA Australia.