

# Health, Emotional, Financial & Religious Impacts of the Coronavirus Pandemic in the Jewish Community

**Nishma Research – June 10, 2020**

## **Summary Report**

*(See full report for detailed results, methodology and survey questionnaire.)*



- The following is based on a May 2020 survey of 860 U.S.-based members of the Jewish community.
- **Awareness, Incidence & Concern** – About 70% are very closely following news about coronavirus, and nearly everyone (90%+) is following it at least somewhat closely. Coronavirus has higher incidence among Orthodox (88% know someone who has contracted it), than among Non-Orthodox (67% know someone), with a sizeable gap between Haredi (94%) and Modern Orthodox (78%).

Haredi are a bit less worried that someone in their household will contract the coronavirus, perhaps because more of them have already contracted it and so they have become more exposed to it.

- **Individuals at Higher Risk** – 19% of Non-Orthodox and 11% of Orthodox are in higher-risk groups, due to age and/or underlying medical conditions. Interestingly, the Haredi have the fewest in the higher risk group (9%), likely due to their younger average age.
- **Testing** – Few (about 4%) had been tested at the time of the survey. Among those not tested, 5% of Non-Orthodox and 12% of Orthodox believe they had contracted the coronavirus. In the area of antibody testing, more Orthodox (6%) had been tested than Non-Orthodox (1%).
- **Personal Safety and Social Distancing Measures** – There is generally strong compliance (about 80%) with recommended behavioral changes, across all groups,

although slightly more so among the Non-Orthodox than among Orthodox. This is likely attributable to larger Orthodox families in closer physical proximity (less geographically dispersed). [See Fig. 1; the index is a composite measure, defined on page 11]

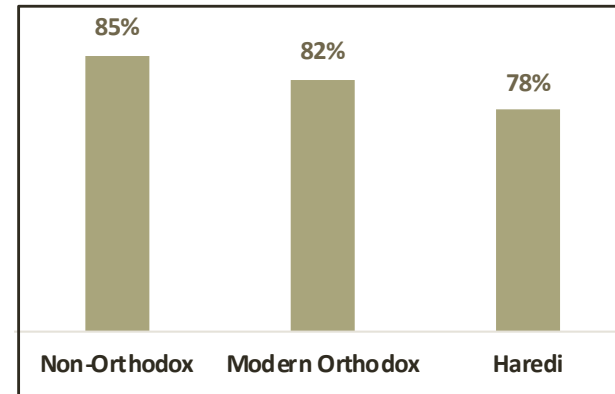


Figure 1. Average of Personal Safety and Social Distancing Indices

- **Sense of Isolation** – About 20% feel a great sense of personal isolation, and about two-thirds feel at least some sense of isolation. [See Fig. 2 on next page]
- **Ability to Meet Financial Expenses** – Among the previously employed, a majority are working from home. But there is much financial pain: some had hours cut (12%), pay cut (10%), or lost their job (5%). While 1-2% are unable to pay for necessary items, many more are finding it hard to do so (12% of Non-Orthodox, 14% of Modern Orthodox, and 24% of Haredi. [See Fig. 3A on next page]

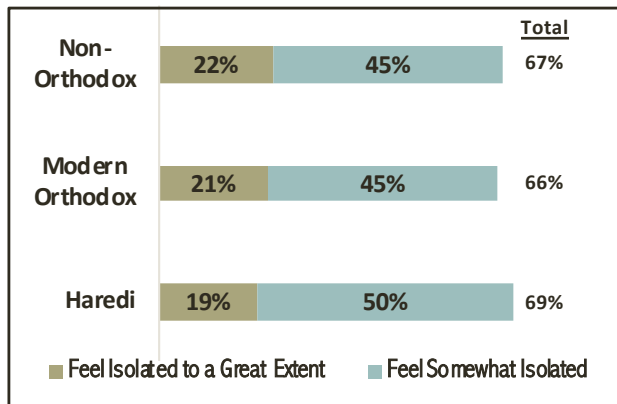


Figure 2. Feelings of Isolation

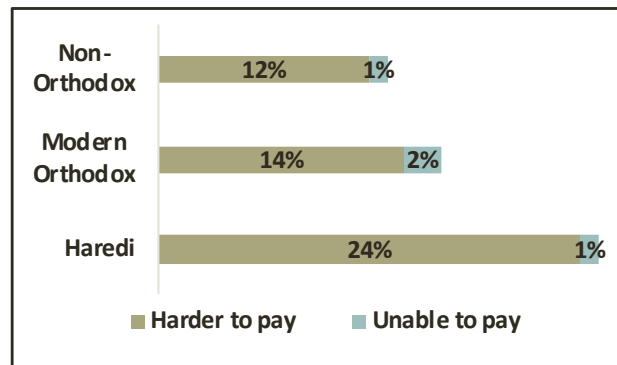


Figure 3A. Ability to Pay For Necessary Expenses

- **Financial Impact Index** – A composite measure of several responses relating to finances, shows that the Haredi (9.3%) have been more adversely affected financially than Modern Orthodox (7.8%), who have been affected more than Non-Orthodox (6.8%). [See Fig. 3B; the index is defined on page 14]

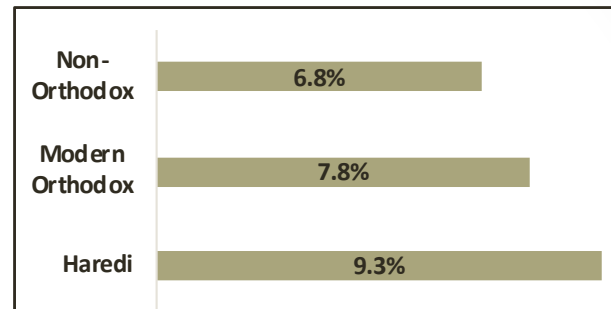


Figure 3B. Financial Impact Index  
(Higher figure denotes more adverse financial impact)

- **Satisfaction With Policymakers** – Respondents are satisfied with the coronavirus responses of their local Jewish community, the medical/scientific communities and their local government, but dissatisfied with the federal government response.
- **Synagogue Contact and Online Offerings** – More than two-thirds of synagogues are checking up on members by phone or other means, and many are using technology to provide services.

In online prayer, Non-Orthodox are very active (90% offer it); more so than Modern Orthodox (68%) and Haredi (20%). All groups are active in conducting online classes.

- **Participation and Satisfaction With Online Offerings** – Where online prayer is offered, Non-Orthodox have participated a bit more than Orthodox (a median of three times vs. one-two times in past four weeks).

About three-fourths of attendees are at least somewhat satisfied. While online prayer is less common among Haredi, they do participate substantially in online classes.

- **Satisfaction With Support by Synagogue and Overall Jewish Community** – There is generally high satisfaction (about 50% very satisfied, and 80% very or somewhat satisfied). More than one-third have sought out online offerings of synagogues and Jewish institutions beyond their locale.
- **Perceived Value of Synagogue Membership** – Very few see their synagogue as now having less value to them due to their pandemic experiences. And, while most views haven't changed, a notable minority of shul members (17% of Non-Orthodox and 28% of Orthodox) now see more value in membership.
- **Impact on How People Feel “Jewishly”** – Very few (3%) say their “feelings of Jewishness” have weakened during the pandemic, while more say their feelings have strengthened (18% of Non-Orthodox, 22% of Modern Orthodox, and a notably high 38% among Haredi). [See Fig. 4]
- **Modern Orthodox Views on Halachic Flexibility** – Slightly less than one-third (29%) of Modern Orthodox believe that rabbis should consider more halachic flexibility in areas of technology; the rest are opposed (46%) or not sure (25%).

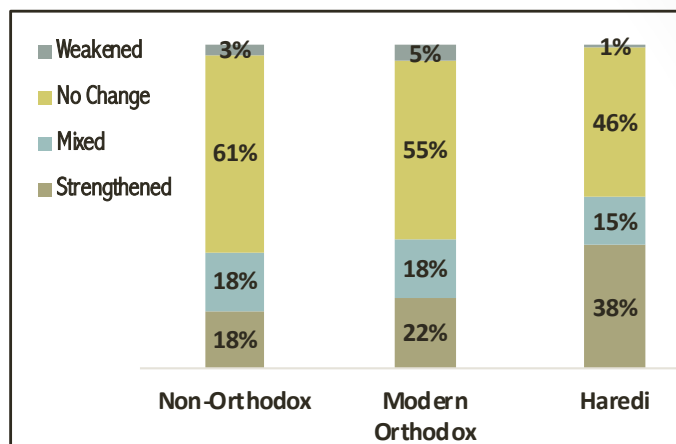


Figure 4. Impact on How People Feel “Jewishly”

- **Children’s Education** – Among respondents with children in grades 1-12, the vast majority (84% of Orthodox and 94% of Non-Orthodox) are being schooled using virtual techniques. Among them, about 30% are very satisfied, and about 80% are very or somewhat satisfied.
- **Political Views** – Differences in party affiliation and preferences are consistent with those uncovered in other studies, i.e., Non-Orthodox almost entirely in Biden’s corner, Modern Orthodox leaning strongly to Biden, and Haredi leaning strongly to Trump.

Since February there has been little impact on political views, i.e., a very small (but not statistically significant) swing toward Biden (1% to 2%).

### Groups Hardest-Hit vs. Least Affected Across Physical, Emotional and Financial Health; and Variations in Personal/Social Safety Compliance

(A summary of key metrics shown in a Coronavirus Dashboard section – see pages 30-40 for detail).

	All	Hardest Hit	Least Affected
<b><u>PHYSICAL</u></b> Respondent has contracted coronavirus	7%	Haredi 26% NYC residents (excl. Manhattan) 20% Less than college degree 18%	Modern Orthodox in total 4% Age 60+ 4% Non-Orthodox in total 5% Income Under \$50K 5% Democrats 5%
<b><u>EMOTIONAL</u></b> Very worried	23%	Retirees 31% NYC residents (excl. Manhattan) 30% Democrats 28% Ages 60+ 27% Less than college degree 26%	New Jersey residents 13% Manhattan residents 14% 18-29 15% 2+ children 16%
Feels isolated to great extent	21%	Not married 36% Less than college degree 32% Income Under \$50K 30% 1 child 29% Age 18-39 27% NYC residents (excl. Manhattan) 27%	Income \$200K+ 15% Age 60-69 16% Married 17% 2+ Children 17% Retired 17% New Jersey residents 17%
<b><u>FINANCIAL</u></b> Financial Impact Index	7.4%	Income under \$50K 16.1% Self-employed 14.6% Less than college degree 13.9% One child at home 11.9% Not married 10.7% Income \$50K-\$79.9K 10.5% Republicans 10.4%	Retirees 0.6% Ages 70+ 2.0% Graduate degree 5.2% Income \$125K+ 5.3% Democrats 5.6% Married 6.1%
	All	Least Compliant	Most Compliant
<b><u>COMPLIANCE</u></b> Average of Personal Safety & Social Distancing Indices	81%	Republicans 75% Less than college degree 76% Haredi 77%	Non-Orthodox in total 89% Manhattan residents 87% Self-Employed 87% Democrats 86% Income \$200K+ 85%

- The accompanying table shows the groups ranking high and low in areas of physical, emotional and financial health, and compliance with safety and distancing recommendations.
- Groups are identified by specific demographic characteristics. Future analysis will identify affected sub-groups across combinations of factors.

Among the many findings:

- Those with less than a college degree are hard-hit across all measures.
- The elderly are most worried but less affected financially.
- In NYC, Manhattan residents are less affected than those in other boroughs.
- Young people and singles are harder hit by feelings of isolation.
- Self-employed are hard-hit financially.
- Republicans (often Haredi) are harder-hit financially and less compliant with safety/distancing recommendations.
- But Democrats are more worried.