Jewish Chicago: Who We Are

A 2020 POPULATION STUDY

Jewish United Fund
TOGETHER for GOOD

NORC at the University of Chicago

Brandeis
COHEN CENTER FOR MODERN JEWISH STUDIES
STEINHARDT SOCIAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE

Revised 1/25/22. Revision history can be found at the end of the report.

www.brandeis.edu/cmjs

The Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies (CMJS), founded in 1980, is dedicated to providing independent, high-quality research on issues related to contemporary Jewish life.

The Cohen Center is also the home of the Steinhardt Social Research Institute (SSRI). Established in 2005, SSRI uses innovative research methods to collect and analyze sociodemographic data on the Jewish community.

Lonnie Nasatir
President

Every 10 years, JUF sponsors a study to understand the unique needs of this Jewish community. Our community—and the world—faced a year unlike any other, and the 2020 Metropolitan Chicago Jewish Population Study offers a snapshot of this critical moment in time.

I want to thank NORC at the University of Chicago and Brandeis University's Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies for conducting this year's study. And I also want to acknowledge that the study was funded in part by generous grants from the Crown Family Philanthropies, Michael Reese Health Trust and the Walder Foundation.

Finally, I'd like to dedicate this report to the memory of a dear colleague and friend, Dr. Peter B. Friedman (1943-2019). Peter was a longtime Executive Vice President of JUF, whose vision led to the launch of this decennial population study and whose wisdom guided the project for 40 years. It is thanks to him that Jewish Chicago has this planning tool which has become integral to understanding our community and meeting its evolving needs.

The contents of this report help shape the ways we go forward. There are hundreds of pages ahead that go into great detail about who we are as a community, but I'd like to highlight just a few important takeaways:

First, Jewish Chicago is strong and growing—our population today stands at nearly 320,000, an increase of 3% in the last 10 years.

The diversity of our community is also growing: 9% of Jewish households include at least one person who identifies as LGBTQ and 7% include at least one person of color. Nearly 1 in 5 Jewish households includes someone with a disability or chronic health issue.

Part of Jewish Chicago's diversity is a growing number of interfaith families. Today, one-third of married and partnered adults are intermarried, up from 20% a decade ago. It is absolutely essential that JUF embraces these families and engages them with a wide menu of opportunities to connect to Jewish life.

We are striving to make JUF more responsive to—and reflective of—these differences in every aspect of our work. We are deeply committed to engaging in meaningful conversations and significant initiatives in the inclusion space.

The study also explores how our community is engaging in Jewish life today—during the pandemic 2 in 5 Jewish adults made changes to their religious life. Studying these patterns of participation in Jewish life deeply informs our work to provide points of connection for people of all ages.

As we have seen in the growing participation of Jews under 40: If our community invests with intention, we can move the needle. I'm proud to report that last year, 4 in 10 young Jews participated in a program sponsored by Jewish young adult engagement organizations like our own Young Leadership Division, Hillel, Base and Moishe House.

We've also learned about attitudes surrounding Jewish education, attachment to Israel and that the majority of Jewish adults are deeply concerned about antisemitism.

And while there is great hope on the horizon, intensified community needs resulting from the pandemic will continue for some time—1 in 5 households are struggling to make ends meet and the greatest single service need is for mental health. As one of the largest humanitarian organizations in the country, we are committed to providing these life-saving services where they are needed most.

Thank you to all who participated in the 2020 community survey. When called, you answered, helping ensure our community's future strength.

I am grateful to have such a deep, rich knowledge of our community's needs—with that knowledge we can truly make a difference.

And thank you, as always, for coming Together for Good.

Sincerely,

Lonnie Nasatir
President, Jewish United Fund of Chicago

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Funders
The 2020 Metropolitan Chicago Jewish Population Study was funded in part by generous grants from:
The Crown Family Philanthropies
Michael Reese Health Trust
The Walder Foundation
The Jewish Federations of North America Research Benchmarking Project, with support from the Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation

Dedication
In memory of Dr. Peter B. Friedman (1943-2019). Peter was a longtime Executive Vice President of JUF, whose vision led to the launch of this decennial population study and whose wisdom guided the project for 40 years. It is thanks to him that Jewish Chicago has this planning tool which has become integral to understanding our community and meeting its evolving needs.

A special thanks to the 5,632 survey respondents whose participation made the study possible.

Recommended Citation:
Aronson, J.K., Brookner, M.A., Saxe, L. (2021). *2020 Metropolitan Chicago Jewish Population Study*. Waltham, MA: Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies and Steinhardt Social Research Institute, Brandeis University. www.brandeis.edu/cmjs/community-studies/chicago-report.html

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INTRODUCTION

This comprehensive study of the Jewish population of Metropolitan Chicago, conducted by the Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies (CMJS) at Brandeis University and NORC at the University of Chicago, employed innovative state-of-the-art methods to create a detailed portrait of the characteristics, attitudes, and behaviors of the Jewish community. The principal goal of this study is to highlight data and findings that will be useful for the Jewish United Fund/Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago (JUF) and other community organizations and funders in their communal planning.

This study is intended to promote an understanding of the community and aid with strategic planning, program development, and policies to support and enhance Jewish life. Decisions regarding the Jewish community that are informed by reliable and valid data are more likely to benefit the community. Specifically, the study was designed to:

- Estimate the number of Jewish adults and children in the community and the number of non-Jewish adults and children who are part of those households
- Describe the community in terms of age, geographic distribution, and other sociodemographic characteristics
- Describe health and economic conditions and service needs
- Measure participation in community programs and institutional Judaism and understand reasons for participation
- Understand the multifaceted cultural, communal, and religious expressions of Judaism that constitute Jewish engagement
- Assess attitudes toward Jewish life and Israel

This study is based on survey data collected from 5,632 respondents from October 2020 to January 2021. This report provides a portrait of the Metropolitan Chicago Jewish community as it was in fall 2020, six months into the COVID-19 pandemic.

Developed by CMJS in close consultation with JUF, the survey used in this study included survey items from JUF's 2010 study, standard questions used by social scientists to study the Jewish community, and new questions tailored to obtain a better understanding of how the Jewish community was affected by and responded to the pandemic. Although some survey responses were likely to be influenced by the special circumstances of the pandemic (e.g., synagogue attendance, employment), the majority of questions were designed to provide a demographic and attitudinal portrait of the stable characteristics of the community. As necessary, questions were modified to account for changes in usual patterns of behavior during the pandemic.

History

This Jewish population study is the most recent in a series of studies of the Chicago-area Jewish community. The first Jewish community study was conducted almost nearly a century ago in 1923, followed by studies in 1931, 1946, 1954, 1982, 1990, 2001, and 2010.[1]

[1] Reports from all of the listed dates (except for 1923) can be found at the Berman Jewish Databank website: https://www.jewishdatabank.org/databank/local-studies

Methodology

Demographic studies like this one aim to provide scientifically valid information by interviewing representative samples of the population and making statistical adjustments so that survey respondents represent the entire community. As it would be impractical and prohibitively expensive to have every Jewish individual and household in Metropolitan Chicago complete a survey, this demographic study, like other such community studies, utilizes scientific survey methods to collect information from a sample of selected members of the community in order to provide estimates of the entire community.

In recent years it has become increasingly complicated to conduct demographic surveys and in particular to obtain an unbiased sample of community members that accurately represents the larger population. To address some of these survey challenges, this study employed updated survey methods.

The methodology utilized widely in the past, random digit dialing (RDD), is particularly problematic when trying to reach households within a specific geographical region. RDD relies on telephone calls to randomly selected households in a given geographic area and phone interviews with household members. As a result of changing telephone technology, particularly caller ID, fewer people answer the phone for unknown callers, putting response rates for telephone surveys below those necessary for generating valid estimates.

More significantly, nearly half of households no longer have landline phones and instead rely exclusively on cell phones. Because of phone number portability, cell phones often have an area code and exchange, and in some cases a billing address, that are not associated with the geographic location in which the phone user resides. Therefore, it is no longer possible to select a range of phone numbers and assume that the owners of those numbers will live in the specified area and be willing to answer the phone. In addition, reliance on cell phones can introduce an age bias since younger individuals are more likely to rely exclusively on cell phones, while older individuals may still utilize landlines.

The present study addresses these obstacles with cutting-edge methodological innovations, including:

- Sampling from Membership Lists. Rather than selecting survey participants from the entirety of Metropolitan Chicago, this study selected respondents based on their appearance on the membership and contact lists of more than 45 local Jewish organizations representing diverse segments of the Jewish community. After the lists were combined and duplicate names eliminated, this approach ensures that anyone in Metropolitan Chicago who has had even minimal contact with a local Jewish organization is eligible to participate in the sample.
- Address-Based Sampling. To reach less engaged Jewish households not on any organizational list, and to avoid the shortcomings of the RDD approach, the study employed address-based sampling (ABS) from the six-county Metropolitan Chicago area. The ABS method selects a sample of households drawn from a full list of addresses in the area, taking into consideration such factors as Jewish population density, consumer data regarding religion, Jewish names, and delivery information utilized by the United States Postal Service.

- Use of Postal Mail, Email, and Phone to Reach Respondents. Because it is difficult to reach respondents by telephone, respondents were contacted initially by postal mail followed by multiple email and phone follow-up efforts.
- Email and Phone Response Options. Respondents were given the option of responding to the survey either via a website or by phone. The latter was especially important for segments of the community that may not be comfortable using a computer or answering questions on a cell phone. Telephone surveys were available in Russian upon request.
- Validation to National US Jewish Population and Administrative Benchmarks. National surveys and polls adjust results using census data and other national benchmarks. Because there are no available benchmarks for the US Jewish population, this study uses benchmarks from two sources: estimates of the Jewish population size and demographic characteristics from the Steinhardt Social Research Institute's American Jewish Population Project (ajpp.brandeis.edu); and selected administrative benchmarks gathered from the Metropolitan Chicago Jewish community regarding synagogue membership, school enrollment, and program participation. These benchmarks were used to validate survey data to ensure that it reflects known characteristics of the population.

A total of 3,877 individuals completed surveys based on a random sample drawn from the membership lists (3,296) and the vendor-supplemented ABS list (581), with an additional 1,755 completed surveys from individuals drawn from a supplemental sample (Table I.1). The purpose of the supplemental sample was to increase the total number of respondents at a reduced cost. The supplemental sample was contacted by email only and was drawn only from organization lists. The full, weighted dataset (described in the next section) accounts for differences in these samples.

The high number of completed surveys enables the study to provide estimates for an increased number of geographic areas, including those with lower Jewish population density, and improves the quality of estimates for subgroups of interest within the Jewish community.

Table I.1. Summary of survey respondents

	Primary	Supplement	Total
Sample	53,500	24,100	
Eligible responses	3,877	1,755	5,632
Response rate (AAPOR RR3) unweighted	15.1%	9.5%	13.3%
Response rate (AAPOR RR3) weighted	14.4%	8.9%	14.2%

The margin of error when analyzing all respondents is +/- 2.7% for the main sample and +/- 2.5% for the full sample.

Survey weighting

We examine survey data not only for the answers of the particular respondents, but also for the larger subgroup or community that they represent. Each completed survey is assigned a numeric "weight" that indicates our estimate of how many people in the population of interest the respondent represents.

Despite the careful methodological approaches employed in this study, bias in estimates is inevitable. Assigning weights is a way to minimize such bias. Estimates for the study are based on applying survey weights that account for the survey design, nonresponse rate, and on external data about the

Jewish and overall Chicagoland-area populations, including data from the American Community Survey, American Jewish Population Project, and JUF data on enrollment and membership in different programs.

Throughout this report, for purposes of analyses and reporting, we derived estimates about the entire population from the primary sample only. We used the combined, or full, sample for analyses of subgroups—such as families with children—where the increased number of respondents in the full sample supported more robust analyses. Details of survey weighting and analyses are provided in the technical appendix.

How to Read this Report

Unless otherwise indicated, this report presents weighted survey data in the form of percentages or proportions. These data should be read not as the percentage or proportion of respondents who answered each question in a given way, but rather as the percentage or proportion of the population that we estimate would answer each question in that way if each member of the population had been surveyed.

No estimate should be considered an exact measurement. The reported estimate for any value, known as a "point estimate," is the most likely value for the variable in question for the entire population given available data, but it is possible that the true value is slightly lower or slightly higher. Because estimates were derived from data collected from a representative sample of the population, there is a degree of uncertainty. The amount of uncertainty depends on multiple factors, the most important of which is the number of survey respondents who provided the data from which an estimate was derived. The uncertainty, known as a "confidence interval," is quantified as a set of values that range from some percentage below the reported estimate to a similar percentage above it. By convention, the confidence interval is calculated to reflect 95% certainty that the true value for the population falls within the range defined by the confidence interval.

As noted above, the margin of error, or the size of the confidence interval, is +/- 2.7% for the main sample and +/- 2.5% for the full sample when reporting on questions that were asked of all respondents. Because the majority of analyses in the report are limited to subsets of respondents, those responses will have larger confidence intervals representing less certainty about the specific point estimate.

As a rule of thumb, the reader should assume that all estimates have a range of plus or minus five points; therefore, reported differences between any two numbers of less than 10 percentage points may not reflect true differences in the population.

Size estimates of subpopulations (e.g., age groups, geographic regions) were calculated as the weighted number of households or individuals for which the respondents provided sufficient information to classify them as members of the subgroup. When data were missing, those respondents were counted as if they were not part of the subgroups for purposes of estimation. For this reason, some subpopulation estimates may undercount information on those least likely to complete the survey or answer particular questions. Missing information cannot reliably be imputed in many such cases because the other information that could serve as a basis to impute data was also missing. Refer to the codebook in the study appendices for the actual number of responses to each question.

Reading report tables

Numeric data in this report is most often presented in tables, although bar graphs and pie charts are used in some cases to illustrate or amplify selected data.

To interpret tables correctly, the title and/or first row of each table will indicate the denominator for any reported numbers. Some tables report a percent of households, some a percent of Jewish adults, and some report on a subset for whom the questions are relevant.

Some tables and figures that present proportions do not add up to 100%. In some cases, this was a result of respondents having the option to select more than one response to a question; in such cases, the text of the report indicates that multiple responses were possible. In most cases, however, the appearance that proportional estimates do not add up to 100% is a result of rounding.

Proportional estimates are rounded to the nearest whole number. When a percentage is between 0% and 0.5% and would otherwise round down to 0%, the number is denoted as < 1%. When there were insufficient respondents in a particular category for reporting reliable information, the estimate is shown as "—".

In some tables, not all response options appear. For example, if the proportion of a group who participated in a Passover seder is noted, the proportion who did not participate will not be shown.

Comparisons across surveys

To contextualize findings and assess trends, we compared data in the present study to similar findings for all US Jews, to the general US population, and to the Metropolitan Chicago Jewish community in 2010. Comparisons to the US Jewish population were drawn from the Pew Research Center report, *Jewish Americans in 2020*.[2] Comparisons to the general US population were taken from US Census data and other national sources; references are included in each case. Comparisons to the 2010 Metropolitan Chicago Jewish community are based on Jewish Policy and Action Research's *2010 Metropolitan Chicago Jewish Community Study: Initial Highlights*.[3] Due to methodological differences between studies and variations in question wording, any comparisons across studies should be treated with caution.

Comparisons across subgroups

In the majority of tables in this report, data are compared across a consistent set of subgroups that have been defined for purposes of this study. The structure of the table varies based on the content. This information is always provided in the first row of the table. The standard set of table categories is shown in Table I.2 along with a description.

As indicated previously, numbers and percentages should not be understood as exact measurements, but as the most likely estimate within a range. It is particularly important to keep this in mind when comparing subgroups. Small differences between subgroups might be the result of random variation in the survey responses rather than actual differences in the population.

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[2] https://www.pewforum.org/2021/05/11/jewish-americans-in-2020/

[3] Ukeles, J.B., Miller, R., Friedman, P., & Dutwin, D. (2010). *Metropolitan Chicago Jewish Community Study: Initial Highlights* [PowerPoint slides]. Chicago: Jewish Policy and Action Research. Retrieved from https://www.jewishdatabank.org/databank/search-results?city=Chicago&state=Illinois&year=2010

When there is a statistically significant difference among subgroups, we are 95% confident that at least some of the differences in estimates reflect actual differences and are not just the result of random chance. In the tables in this report, we designate these differences by shading them light gray. Findings that are not statistically significant are not shaded. Even in cases where there are statistically significant differences in a full set of responses, it is unlikely that there are statistically significant differences between every pair of numbers. As noted above, even when a table is statistically significant, differences between any two numbers of less than 10 percentage points may not reflect true differences in the population.

Table I.2. Analytic categories for report

	Jewish adults	Jewish households
Description of group		
Region (Details in Chapter 2)	Geographic region in which the individual resides	Geographic region in which the household resides.
Engagement group (Details in Chapter 3)	Engagement category assigned to the individual, based on the Index of Jewish Engagement	Engagement category assigned to the survey respondent within the household, based on the Index of Jewish Engagement.
Lifestage: population groups based on age and household composition. (Details in Chapter 1)	Composition of household, age of the individual respondent.	Composition of household, age of the "head of household." If there is a couple in the household, it is the oldest Jewish member of the couple. Otherwise it is the respondent's age.
Financial status (Details in Chapter 10)	Financial status of household, as described by respondent	Financial status of household, as described by respondent

Reading open-ended and qualitative data

In order to elicit more information about respondents' opinions and experiences than could be provided in a check box format, the survey included a number of questions that called for open-text responses. All such responses were categorized, or "coded," to identify topics and themes mentioned by multiple respondents. Because a consistent set of questions and response categories were not offered to each respondent, it would be misleading to report the weighted proportion of responses to these questions. Instead, as is customary when reporting qualitative data, we indicated the total number of responses that mentioned a particular code or theme. This number appears in parentheses after the response without a percent sign, or in tables labeled as "n" or number of responses. In most cases, sample quotes are also included, with identifying information removed and edited for clarity.

Limitations

Due to the methodology used to reach community members, some groups were likely to have been undercounted and/or underrepresented. In particular, residents of institutional settings such as hospitals, nursing homes, and dormitories on college campuses, as well as adults who had never been in any contact with a Jewish organization in Metropolitan Chicago, were less likely to have been identified and contacted to complete the survey. Although we cannot produce a precise count of these individuals, these undercounts were unlikely to have introduced significant bias into the

reported estimates. Where appropriate, we noted the limitations of the methodology. To the extent possible, survey weights were used to minimize this bias.

The present report has been designed to provide basic information about Jewish life across a wide range of topics and a variety of subgroups. It was not designed to provide detailed information about any single topic or subset of the community. Although detailed data cannot always be provided, the information that is included can serve as a springboard for more specific and targeted analyses, as well as additional follow-up research. More details about each item are available in the report appendices and through analysis of the dataset.

Technical appendix and study data

The technical appendix to the report, available for download from the study website, includes:

- Methodological details
- Instrument and codebook
- All study documentation

Also available on the study website:

- Excel file with crosstabs for all study variables
- Public use dataset

https://www.brandeis.edu/cmjs/community-studies/chicago-report.html

CHAPTER 1. DEMOGRAPHIC PORTRAIT

Metropolitan Chicago's[4] Jewish population includes 319,600 Jewish individuals living in 175,800 Jewish households (Table 1.1). A Jewish household is defined as one that includes at least one Jewish adult. Including Jewish and non-Jewish individuals, a total of 420,300 people reside in Metropolitan Chicago Jewish households.

Key findings

- Since 2010, the total number of Jewish households increased by 19%, the total number of people in Jewish households increased by 10%, and the total number of Jewish adults increased by 13%.
- Nearly three-in-four Jewish adults in Chicago are married (68%) or partnered (6%). Among married and partnered adults, two thirds (67%) are inmarried, and one third (33%) are intermarried.
- One-in-four Jewish households in Metropolitan Chicago (25%) are households with minor children.
- Seven percent of Metropolitan Chicago Jewish households includes an adult or child who identifies as a person of color; this individual may or may not be Jewish. Although only 2% of Jewish adults are persons of color, a larger share, 7%, of Jewish children are persons of color.
- The Metropolitan Chicago share of Jewish adults with no Jewish denomination is 44%, 12 percentage points higher than the national figure of 32%.[5]

Jewish people, Jewish households, and people in Jewish households

The Jewish population of Metropolitan Chicago includes 264,600 Jewish adults and 54,900 Jewish children (Table 1.1). There are 82,200 adults who are not Jewish in Jewish households (24% of all adults), and 18,600 children in Jewish households who are not considered Jewish (25% of all children).

About one-in-18 households in Metropolitan Chicago (5.7%) is a Jewish household, and about one-in-25 residents of Metropolitan Chicago is Jewish (3.8%).[6]

[4] Metropolitan Chicago includes Cook, DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry, and Will Counties in Illinois.
[5] Pew Research Center, *Jewish Americans in 2020*. Washington, DC: Pew Research Center.
[6] Source: US Census Bureau. (2019). 2019 American Community Survey 1-year estimates. Retrieved from https://data.census.gov/cedsci/. Total population: 8,357,213; total number of households: 3,082,609.

Table 1.1. Metropolitan Chicago Jewish population, 2020

Total Jewish households	175,800
Total Jewish individuals	319,600
Total people in Jewish households	420,300
Adults in Jewish households (ages 18 and older)	346,800
Jewish adults in Jewish households	264,600
Non-Jewish adults in Jewish households	82,200
Children in Jewish households (under age 18)	73,500
Jewish children in Jewish households	54,900
Non-Jewish children in Jewish households	18,600

Note: Rounded to the nearest 100; discrepancies due to rounding.

Defining Jewish identity

Research on Jewish identity utilizes a variety of definitions through which an individual can self-identify as Jewish. The "gold standard" for defining Jewish identity in this way was used by the Pew Research Center in their *2013 Portrait of Jewish Americans*.

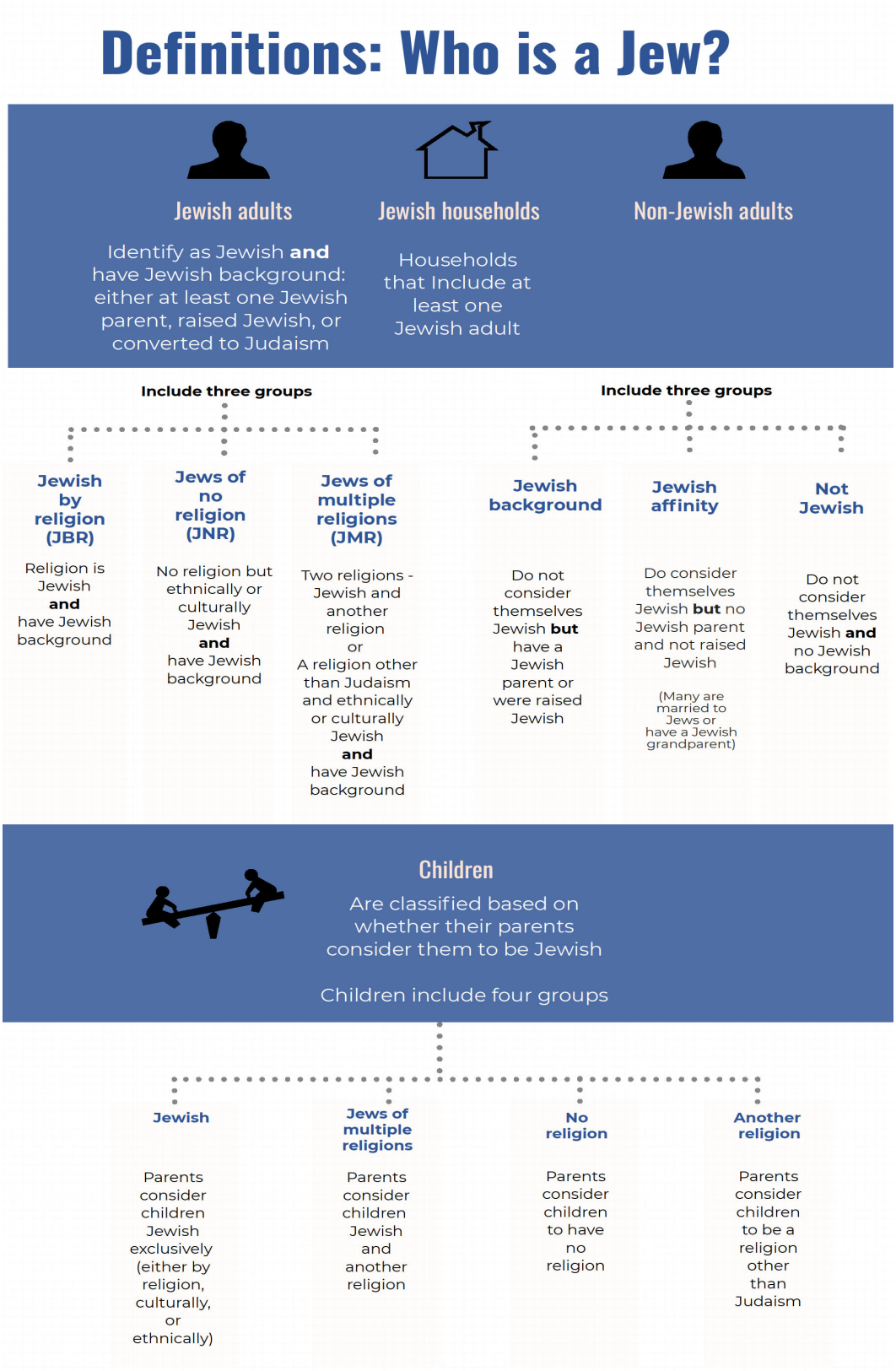
For the Metropolitan Chicago Jewish Population Study, a variation of this classification scheme was used. Survey respondents were asked to answer a series of four questions:

- What is your religion?
- Do you consider yourself to be Jewish aside from religion?
- Were either of your parents Jewish?
- Were you raised Jewish?

Based on responses to these questions, the study classified Jews into one of three categories (see Figure 1.1):

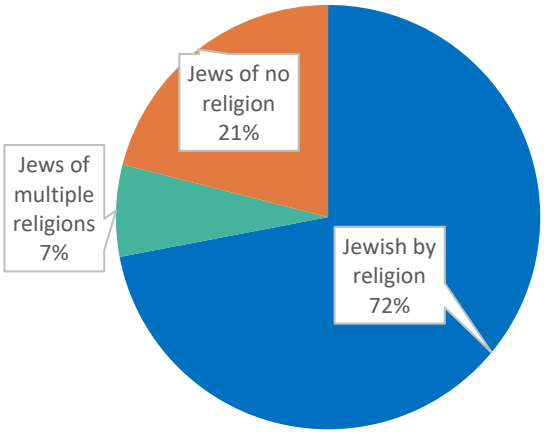
- Jews by religion (referred to as JBRs)
- Jews of no religion, if their religion is not Judaism but they consider themselves ethnically or culturally Jewish (referred to as JNRs)
- Jews of multiple religions, if they indicate they are Jewish and also have another religion (referred to as JMRs)

Figure 1.1. Jewish definitions for this study



As shown in Figure 1.2, of the 264,600 Jewish adults in Metropolitan Chicago, 191,800 or 72% are Jewish by religion (JBR); 54,300 or 21% are Jews of no religion (JNR); and 18,600 or 7% are Jews of multiple religions (JMR).[7]

Figure 1.2. Religious definitions of Jewish adults



The Jewish identity of children is based on whether parents consider their children to be Jewish. Of the 54,900 Jewish children in Metropolitan Chicago (Table 1.2), 84% are considered Jewish only, and 16% are considered Jewish and another religion. Of the 18,600 children in Jewish households who are not Jewish, 79% have no religion, and 21% have a religion other than Judaism.

Table 1.2. Children in Metropolitan Chicago Jewish households

Children (under age 18)	73,500
Jewish children	54,900
Jewish-only children	46,300
JMR children	8,700
Non-Jewish children	18,600
Children with no religion	14,700
Children with another religion	4,000

Note: Rounded to the nearest 100; discrepancies due to rounding.

Jewish population growth between 2010 and 2020

Since 2010, the total number of Jewish households increased by 19%, the total number of people in Jewish households increased by 10%, and the total number of Jewish adults increased by 13% (Table 1.3). The largest population increase occurred in the number of Jewish households and number of

[7] The total Jewish population estimates in this study include Jews of multiple religions as Jewish. They are not counted as Jewish in the most recent Pew Research Center study, *Jewish Americans in 2020*.

non-Jewish adults in Jewish households. Because intermarriage rates increased from 2010 to 2020 (see below), there are now more Jewish households with one Jewish adult and one non-Jewish adult.

Since 2010, the estimate of Jewish children decreased by 19%. This decrease is primarily the result of methodological improvements in the current study that allowed for more precise estimates and should not be interpreted as evidence of actual decline in the number of Jewish children.[8]

For purposes of comparison, the overall Metropolitan Chicago population increased by 0.3% from 2010 to 2019 and the number of households increased by 4%, based on US Census data.[9] Another useful comparison, however, is to the non-Hispanic white college-educated population ages 25 and older, which increased across the area by approximately 14% from 2010 to 2019. This change is similar to the 13% increase in Jewish adults from 2010 to 2020 (Table 1.3).[10]

Table 1.3. Changes in Jewish population from 2010 to 2020

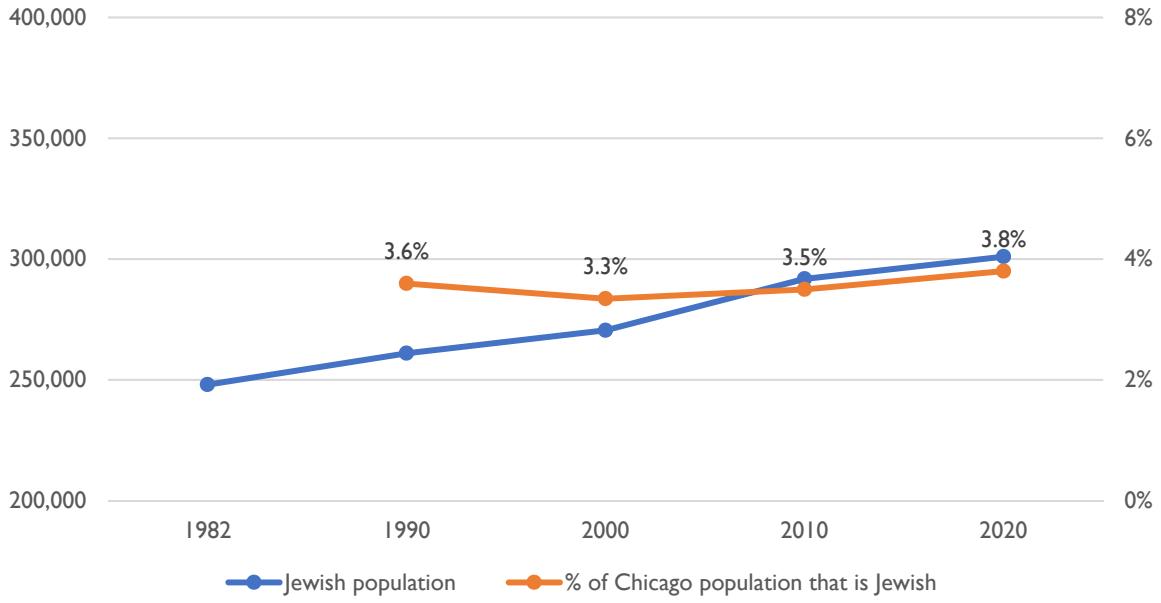
	2010	2020	Percent Change
Jewish households	148,100	175,800	19%
People in Jewish households	381,900	420,300	10%
Total Jews	308,800	319,600	3%
Adults (ages 18+)	301,300	346,800	15%
Jewish adults	233,500	264,600	13%
Non-Jewish adults	67,800	82,200	21%
Children (under age 18)	80,600	73,500	-9%
Jewish children*	67,800	54,900	-19%
Non-Jewish children	12,100	18,600	54%

Note: Rounded to the nearest 100; discrepancies due to rounding
* The estimated decrease in the number of Jewish children is primarily the result of methodological improvements in the current study that allowed for more precise estimates and should not be interpreted as evidence of actual decline.

Figure 1.3 shows Jewish population growth from 1982 to 2020, along with the change in the percentage of the total Metropolitan Chicago population starting in 2000. Figure 1.4 shows the corresponding change in the total US Jewish population.

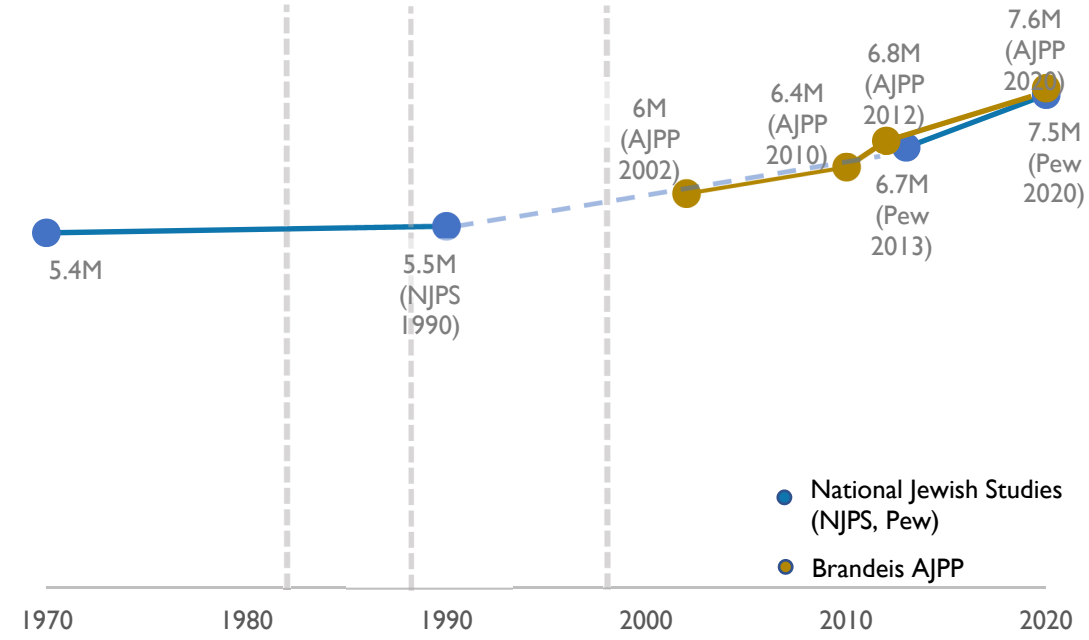
[8] See Technical Appendix for methodological details https://www.brandeis.edu/cmjs/community-studies/chicago-report.html
[9] Source: US Census Bureau. (2019). 2019 American Community Survey 1-year estimates. Retrieved from https://data.census.gov/cedsci// US Census Bureau. (2010). 2010 American Community Survey 1-year estimates. Retrieved from https://data.census.gov/cedsci/
[10] Although an imperfect proxy because there are many Jews who are people of color, not college educated, or who are under 25 years old, patterns of growth or decline in the non-Hispanic white college educated population are typically correlated with growth or decline in the Jewish population.

Figure 1.3. Jewish population growth in Metropolitan Chicago, 1982-2020[11]



Note: Jewish % is not provided for 1982 because study geographic boundaries changed.

Figure 1.4. Jewish population growth in United States, 1970-2020[12]



[11] Previous study data found at the Berman Jewish Data Bank, <http://www.jewishdatabank.org/studies/us-local-communities.cfm>. Percent of Jewish population calculated from ACS data.

Age and gender

The median age of Jewish adults and children in Metropolitan Chicago is 48 (half are older, half are younger) and the average age of Jewish adults and children is 45. For Chicago Jewish adults only, the median age is 52, and average age is 55. Nationally, the median age for Jewish adults is 49.[13]

Table 1.4 categorizes Chicago Jewish adults according to their generation: Gen Z, millennial/Gen X, baby boomers, and the greatest/silent generation. The age distribution of Chicago Jewish adults is similar to that of all US Jews.

Table 1.4. Distribution of Jewish adults by generation

	Chicago Jews 2020 (%)	US Jews 2020 [14] (%)	Chicago Population 2019[15] (%)
Gen Z (ages 18-24)	12	11	12
Millennial/Gen X	38	41	54
Ages 25-34	11	15	19
Ages 35-44	13	13	17
Ages 45-54	14	13	17
Baby Boomers	38	35	27
Ages 55-64	19	19	16
Ages 65-74	19	16	11
Greatest/Silent (Ages 75+)	12	14	8
TOTAL	100	100	100

Note: Discrepancies in totals due to rounding.

The proportions of men and women is roughly equal. Of all Jewish adults, 50% identify as male, 50% as female, and < 1% as non-binary or another gender identity.

Composition of Jewish households and lifestages

As noted above, 420,300 people live in 175,800 Jewish households in Metropolitan Chicago. This section provides more detail about the composition of these households. On average, each household includes 2.4 individuals and 1.8 Jewish individuals.

Throughout this report, the term "couples" includes those who are legally married and those who are partnered and living together. Unless otherwise specified, "children" refers to minor children under age 18.

One-in-four Jewish households in Metropolitan Chicago (25%) includes minor children under age 18 (Figure 1.5 and Table 1.5). One third of Jewish households (35%) consist of couples without

[12] Source: Saxe. L. & and Aronson, J.K. (2021). *Implications of Pew 2020 for the Jewish future* [PowerPoint slides]. Waltham: Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies, Brandeis University. https://www.brandeis.edu/cmjs/pdfs/pew/philanthropic-community-pew2020-051421-final.pdf

[13] Pew Research Center, Jewish Americans in 2020.

[14] Data in this column from the American Jewish Population Project.

[15] US Census Bureau. (2019). 2019 American Community Survey 1-year estimates. Retrieved from https://data.census.gov/cedsci/

children. Slightly over one quarter of households (27%) consist of single adults without children, including households with unrelated roommates. The remaining households, 12%, are multi-generational (parents and adult children living together). This category include both adults who are living with their young adult children as well as adults living with older parents.

The "lifestage" categories that combine household composition and age, as presented in Figure 1.5 and Table 1.5, are used throughout this report to analyze demographic differences in study findings.

Figure 1.5. Composition of Jewish households

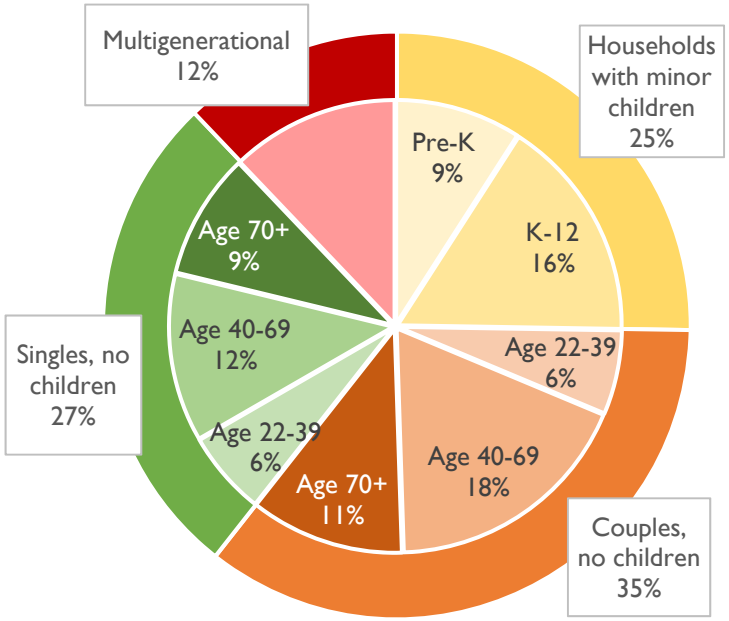


Table 1.5. Composition of Jewish households

Household type	Jewish households (%)
Households with minor children (includes both singles and partnered parents)	25
Youngest child not yet in kindergarten	9
Youngest child in K-12	16
Couples without minor children at home	35
Couple, ages 22-39, no child at home	6
Couple, ages 40-69, no child at home	18
Couple, ages 70+, no child at home	11
Singles without minor children at home (includes roommates)	27
Single, ages 22-39, no child at home	6
Single, ages 40-69, no child at home	12
Single, ages 70+, no child at home	9
Multigenerational/other without minor children (parents and adult children)	12
TOTAL	100

Note: Discrepancies in totals due to rounding.

Part-time, transient, and temporary residents

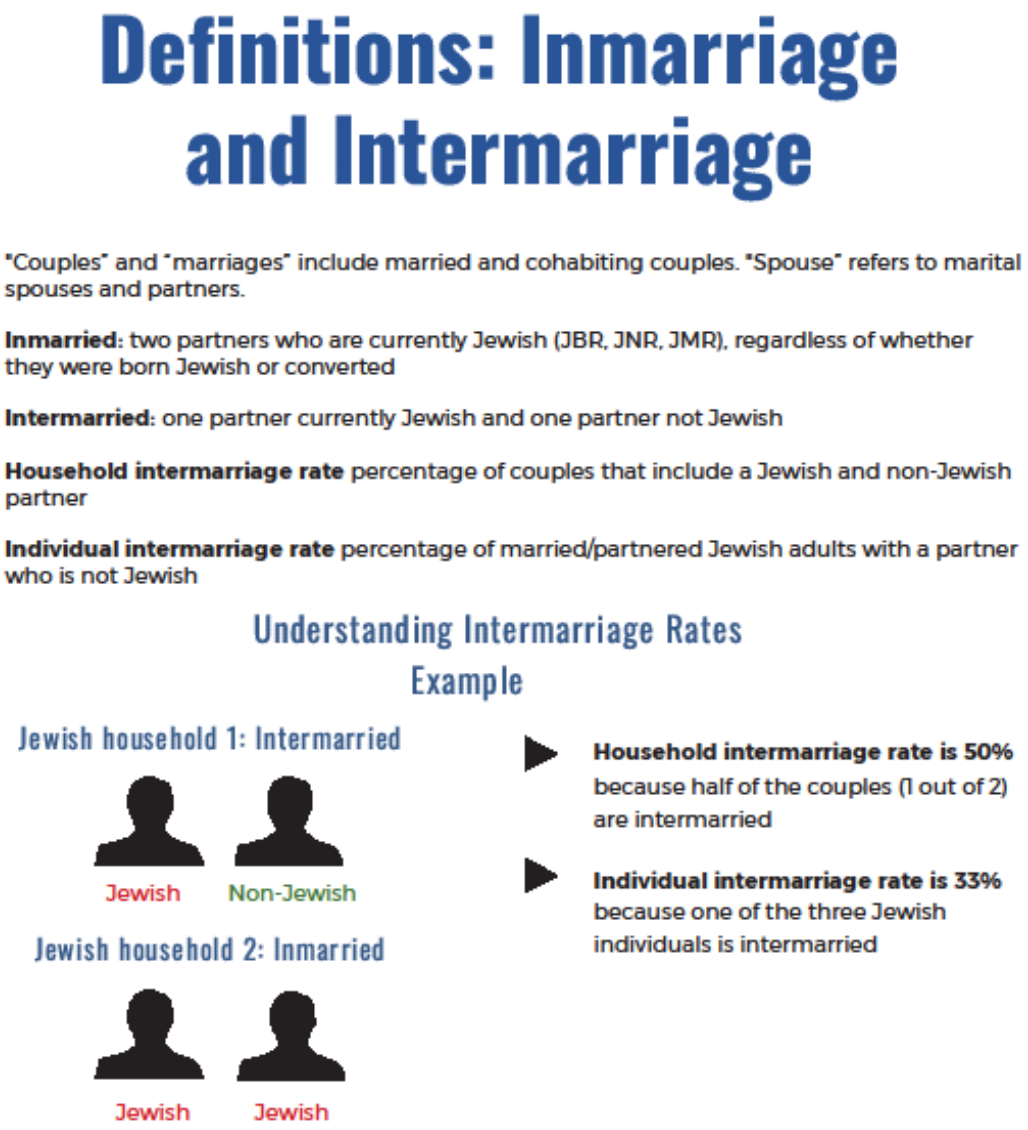
Included among the adults in Metropolitan Chicago Jewish households are about 18,600 adults (Jewish and non-Jewish) whose parents consider them part of their household even though they do not live with their parents full time. This figure represents about 5% of adults in Jewish households. The majority are students, including 11% who attend school in Metropolitan Chicago and 77% who attend school elsewhere. Another 9% of these adults are not students but are part-time residents elsewhere for another reason (not specified). A small number (2%) of adults live elsewhere in Chicago but are still part of their parent's households.

Not included in the population estimates above are 9,200 adults and 2,300 children, who were living in 8,300 Metropolitan Jewish households at the time of the study but were not permanent members of those households. Because of the study timing, the majority of those temporary residents had their living situation disrupted due to the COVID-19 pandemic. They are not included in population estimates and are not reflected elsewhere in this report.

Marital status

This section describes the marital status of Jewish households in Metropolitan Chicago. See Figure 1.6 for definitions of inmarriage and intermarriage for purposes of this study.

Figure 1.6. Definitions of inmarriage and intermarriage



Nearly three-in-four Jewish adults in Chicago (73%) are either married (68%) or partnered (6%) Among married and partnered adults, two thirds (67%) are inmarried, and one third (33%) are intermarried.

National comparisons are based only on couples who are legally married. Among Chicago Jewish adults who are legally married, 31% are intermarried. In comparison, among all US Jews who are legally married, 42% are intermarried.[16] In 2010, 20% of married Chicago Jewish adults were intermarried.[17]

[16] Pew Research Center, 2021.

[17] Ukeles, J.B., Miller, R., Friedman, P., & Dutwin, D. (2010). *Metropolitan Chicago Jewish Community Study: Initial Highlights* [PowerPoint slides, p. 75]. The 20% individual intermarriage rate, (equivalent to a 33% couple intermarriage rate) does

Although the rate of marriage is lowest for younger adults, their rate of intermarriage is higher (Table 1.6). Of those ages 22-29, 43% are married or partnered and, among those, 54% are intermarried.

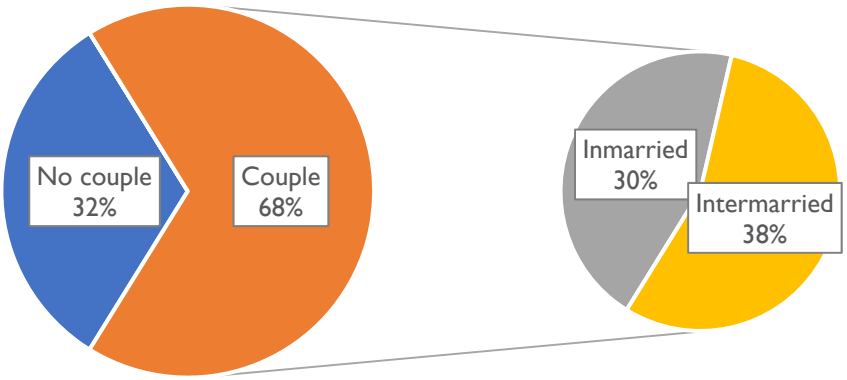
Among those Jewish adults who are unmarried or not partnered, 12% are single and have never been married, 8% are divorced, 1% are separated, and 5% are widowed (not shown in table).

Table 1.6. Inmarriage and intermarriage by age (individual rate, includes partners who live together)

	Overall (%)	Ages 22-29 (%)	Ages 30-39 (%)	Ages 40-49 (%)	Ages 50-59 (%)	Ages 60-69 (%)	Ages 70-79 (%)	Ages 80 + (%)
Married/partnered Jewish adults	73	43	71	81	76	75	76	56
Of married/partnered Jewish adults:								
Inmarried	67	46	60	61	69	64	76	89
Intermarried	33	54	40	39	31	36	24	11
TOTAL	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

The proportion of Jewish households that include an inmarried or intermarried couple is calculated differently (household intermarriage rate) than for individuals (individual intermarriage rate) (see Figure 1.6 for definitions). Thirty-two percent of Metropolitan Chicago Jewish households do not include a couple, 30% include an inmarried couple, and 38% include an intermarried couple (Figure 1.7). Of married or partnered couples, 55% are intermarried (the household intermarriage rate).

Figure 1.7. Proportion of Jewish households with inmarried or intermarried couples



not include "Jewish and something else" couples as defined in that study. Including those couples increased the individual intermarriage rate to 23% and the couple intermarriage rate to 37%. The 2010 report did not clearly explain whether marriages between JBRs and JMRS, and between JMRs and non-Jews, were counted as inmarriages or intermarriages.

Jewish denominations

Jewish denominational affiliation is one of the traditional ways of understanding Jewish identity and is frequently related to other measures of Jewish engagement. Denominational affiliation is measured by respondents' reports of their identification and is distinct from whether they belong to a synagogue and/or the denomination of the synagogue to which they belong. The relationship between denomination and other measures of Jewish engagement, including synagogue membership, will be explored later in the report.

Consistent with national trends, denominational affiliation is declining, and the most rapid growth is among those who do not identify with a particular denomination. Among Jewish adults in Metropolitan Chicago, 44% do not identify with any denomination (Table 1.7). Nationally, 32% of Jewish adults have no denominational identity.[18] The "no denomination" category has more than tripled in Metropolitan Chicago since 2010: from 14% to 44%.[19]

Among Jewish adults in Metropolitan Chicago, 7% are Orthodox. This is the same share as in 2010 and just less than the share among all US Jews (9%). The share of Conservative Jews in Metropolitan Chicago has declined considerably from 2010: from 30% to 16%. The latter figure closely matches the national figure of 17%. The share of Reform Jews has also declined from 2010: from 45% to 29%. The national figure is 37%.[20]

Table 1.7. Denomination of Jewish adults in Metropolitan Chicago, 2010 and 2020

	Chicago 2010 (%)	Chicago 2020 (%)	US Jews (2020)[21] (%)
Orthodox	7	7	9
Conservative[22]	30	16	17
Reform	45	29	37
Other denomination	4	4	4
No denomination	14	44	32
Total	100	100	100

The Orthodox Jewish population of Metropolitan Chicago includes 4% who are Modern Orthodox and 1% each who are Yeshivish/Litvish, Chabad, Chasidic, or something else. (Table 1.8). In this report, all of the Orthodox denominations other than Modern Orthodox are combined and referred to as "Other Orthodox."

Jewish adults who are classified as "no denomination" describe themselves as Just Jewish (26%) or secularly/culturally Jewish (18%).

[18] Pew Research Center, 2021.
[19] It is likely that some of the reported changes in denominational identity from 2010 to 2020 are due to methodological differences between the studies.
[20] Pew Research Center, 2021.
[21] Pew Research Center, 2021.
[22] Conservative includes those who identify as "Traditional."

Table 1.8. Denomination of Jewish adults in Metropolitan Chicago 2020, detail

Denomination	Chicago Jewish adults, 2020 (%)
Orthodox	7
Modern Orthodox	4
Yeshivish/Litvish	1
Chabad	1
Chasidic	< 1
Other	< 1
Conservative	16
Reform	29
Other denomination	4
Reconstructionist	2
Humanistic	1
Renewal	< 1
Other	1
No denomination	44
Just Jewish	26
Secular/culturally Jewish	18

Diversity in the Jewish community

Metropolitan Chicago is home to a diverse Jewish community with individuals and households of many different demographic backgrounds. Some of the demographic categories included in the present study include Israelis, Russian-speaking Jews, LGBTQ Jews, Holocaust survivors and their descendants, and Jews of color (Table 1.9).

Israelis and Russian-speakers

Three percent of Jewish households in Metropolitan Chicago have at least one individual who is an Israeli citizen, and 4% of all Jewish adults are Israeli citizens. Eleven percent of Jewish households in Metropolitan Chicago include someone who grew up in a Russian-speaking home[23] and 11% of all Jewish adults grew up in a Russian-speaking home.

LGBTQ

Nine percent of Jewish households in Metropolitan Chicago has at least one individual who identifies at LGBTQ, and 5% of Jewish adults identifies as LGBTQ.

Holocaust survivors and descendants

Seven percent of Metropolitan Chicago Jewish adults ages 75 and older are survivors of the Holocaust or are World War II refugees. Among Jewish adults younger than age 75, 24% are descendants of a Holocaust survivor, victim, or World War II refugee.

[23] Jewish people who grew up in Russian speaking homes are sometimes referred to as "Russian-speaking Jews."

Table 1.9. Size of key demographic groups

	All Jewish households	All people in Jewish households	All Jewish adults	Number of individuals*
Israeli citizens	3%	3%	4%	11,900
Grew up in Russian-speaking home	11%	9%	11%	36,200
LGBTQ	9%	6%	5%	24,000
	Jewish households age 75+	People in Jewish households age 75+	Jewish adults age 75+	
Holocaust survivors (among 75 +)	9%	8%	7%	2,800
	Jewish households under age 75	People in Jewish households under age 75	Jewish adults under age 75	
Survivor descendants (among < 75)	28%	25%	24%	66,200

*Number of individuals is the best estimate; 95% confident the actual number falls within the following ranges. Israeli citizens: 7,300-16,400; Russian-speaking: 29,400-44,000; LGBTQ: 20,100-28,000; Holocaust survivors: 1,800-3,800; Survivor descendants: 58,600-73,900.

Race, ethnicity, and Jews of color

Demographic studies utilize a variety of measures to determine racial and ethnic identification. For purposes of this study, racial and ethnic identification is based on responses to a combination of three questions asked about all members of the household: What is your race?; Are you of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin?; Do you identify as a person of color?

Seven percent of Metropolitan Chicago Jewish households include an adult or child who identifies as a person of color; this individual may or may not be Jewish (Table 1.10). Although only 2% of Jewish adults are persons of color, a larger share, 7%, of Jewish children are persons of color.

The vast majority of Jewish households (97%) include at least one person who identifies as white and no other race and is non-Hispanic. Five percent of Jewish households include someone who identifies as white and no other race and is Hispanic. Eight percent of Jewish households include someone who identifies with a race other than white and is non-Hispanic. One percent of Jewish households includes someone with a race other than white and is Hispanic. Note that these percentages do not add up to 100% because Jewish households include multiple individuals with different racial and ethnic identities. In total, 14% of Jewish households includes someone who is nonwhite and/or Hispanic (Jewish or not).

The racial and ethnic identity of Jewish children is more diverse than among adults. Among Jewish adults, 94% identify as white and no other race and are not Hispanic. Among Jewish children, 83% are white and no other race and are not Hispanic.

Table 1.10. Racial and ethnic identification

	Jewish households that include someone with this identity (%)	Individuals in Jewish households with this identity (%)	All Jewish individuals (%)	All Jewish adults (%)	All Jewish children (%)
Self-identifies as person of color	7	4	3	2	7
Race and ethnicity					
White only, non-Hispanic	97	89	94	94	83
White only, Hispanic	5	4	3	2	5
Non-white/multiracial, non-Hispanic	8	6	3	3	10
Non-white/multiracial, Hispanic	1	1	1	1	2
Any non-white, multiracial, and/or Hispanic	14	11	5	6	17

Table 1.11 shows the relationship between racial/ethnic identity and self-identification as a person of color. Among Jewish individuals of all racial and ethnic identities, 3% identify as persons of color (Table 1.11). Among the 94% of Jewish individuals who identify as white and no other race and non-Hispanic, less than 1% describe themselves as a person of color. Among the 3% of Jewish individuals who identify as white and Hispanic, 10% identify as a person of color.

For Jewish individuals who identify as a race other than white, a larger share consider themselves to be persons of color. Among the 3% of Jewish individuals who identify as a race other than white and non-Hispanic, 35% identify as a person of color. For Jewish individuals who identify as a race other than white and Hispanic, 52% identify as a person of color.

Table 1.11. Race and ethnicity of Jews

	All Jewish individuals (%)	Of this group, % who identify as a person of color (%)
Any racial or ethnic identity	100	3
White only, non-Hispanic	94	< 1
White only, Hispanic	3	10
Non-white or multiracial, non-Hispanic	3	35
Non-white or multiracial, Hispanic	1	52

Jewish heritage

Eighty-six percent of Jewish adults in Metropolitan Chicago identify their Jewish heritage as Ashkenazi. Four percent of Jewish adults identify their Jewish heritage as Sephardi, and 1% identify as Mizrahi. Nine percent of Jewish adults did not identify with a heritage.

Political views

Almost two thirds of Jewish adults in Metropolitan Chicago consider themselves to be politically liberal (Figure 1.8), including 16% who are extremely liberal, 37% who are liberal, and 12% who are slightly liberal. Eighteen percent of Jewish adults identify as moderate and 18% as conservative. Nationally, 50% of Jewish adults describe their political views as liberal, 32% as moderate, and 16% as conservative (Table 1.12).[24]

Figure 1.8. Political leanings of Jewish adults, Metropolitan Chicago and US

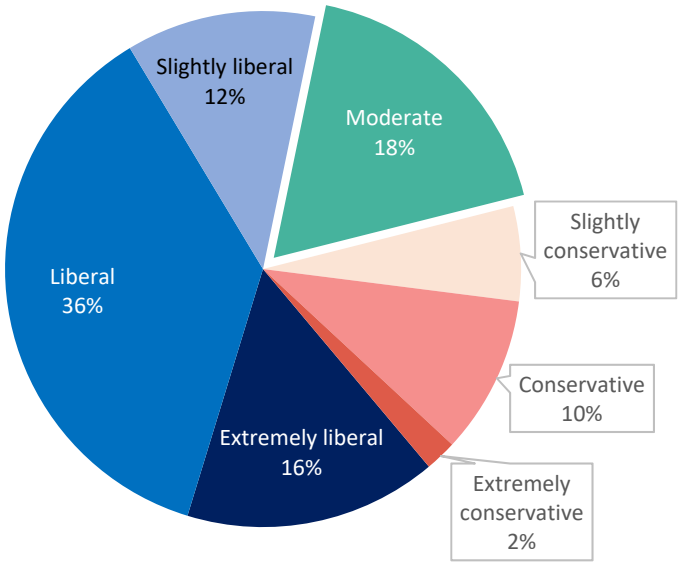


Table 1.12. Political leanings of Metropolitan Chicago Jewish adults

	Chicago Jewish adults (%)	US Jewish adults (%)
Liberal	64	50
Moderate	18	32
Conservative	18	16

[24] Pew Research Center, 2021.

CHAPTER 2. GEOGRAPHY AND RESIDENCE

The profile of Jewish households in each of the 10 regions of Metropolitan Chicago differs in terms of demographics as well as Jewish engagement. This chapter describes the population estimates and demographic composition of each region. Later in this report, we explore regional differences in Jewish engagement, health, and finances.

Key findings

- The region with the largest percentage of Jewish households and Jewish individuals is City North, with 18% of Jewish households and 16% of Jewish individuals, followed closely by the Near North Suburbs, with 14% of Jewish households and 14% of Jewish individuals.
- The area with the highest Jewish density in Metropolitan Chicago is in North Suburbs Cook, where Jewish individuals constitute 32% of all individuals in the region and Jewish households constitute 40% of all households.
- The only region that experienced a decline in Jewish population since 2010 was the Near North Suburbs, which saw a 16% decline in the number of Jewish households. The Jewish population of all other regions increased.
- Jewish households with minor children represent 25% of all households in Metropolitan Chicago. City Far North, City Other, and West Suburbs have the largest share of families with Pre-K children.
- Young couples and singles under age 40 primarily reside in the three city regions.
- About half of Jewish adults (52%) were born in the Metropolitan Chicago area. About one-in-three Jewish adults (33%) were born elsewhere in the United States. The remainder of Jewish adults were born in another country, including 9% in Russia or the Former Soviet Union, 1% in Israel, and 1% in Canada.
- The Near NW Suburbs include the largest share of Jewish households in which someone is Russian speaking (22% of households in the region).
- City Far North and City Other include the largest concentration of Jewish households that include someone who is LGBTQ, someone who is non-white or Hispanic, and someone who identifies as a person of color.
- About 4% of Jewish adults who currently reside in Metropolitan Chicago have lived there less than five years, and another 6% have lived in Metropolitan Chicago between five and nine years. Almost two-in-five Jewish adults, 38%, have lived in Metropolitan Chicago for 50 years or more, including many who were born in Metropolitan Chicago. More than one-in-four Jewish adults, 28%, have lived at their current address for less than five years.
- The three city regions include the largest concentration of new residents. Eleven percent of Jewish adults in City Far North and in City North, as well as 14% of Jewish adults in City Other, have lived in Metropolitan Chicago for less than five years.

Geographic regions

For purposes of this study, Metropolitan Chicago consists of six counties: Cook, DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry, and Will.[25] To better organize the data collected for this study, the city and suburbs are divided into ten regions. Definitions of these regions can be found in Table 2.1. Maps showing the boundaries of each region and the number of households appear below (Figures 2.1 and 2.2).

Table 2.1. Description of geographic regions

Region name	Description
City Far North	Rogers Park/Peterson Park/West Ridge, Northern City Limit
City North	Loop to Edgewater
City Other	Remaining Chicago zip codes
Near North Suburbs	Des Plaines, Evanston, Glenview, Lincolnwood, Morton Grove, Niles, Park Ridge, Skokie
North Suburbs Cook	Glencoe, Kenilworth, Northbrook, Wilmette, Winnetka
North Suburbs Lake	Deerfield, Gurnee, Highland Park, Highwood, Lake Bluff, Lake Forest, Wadsworth, Waukegan, Winthrop Harbor, Zion
Near NW Suburbs	Arlington Heights, Buffalo Grove, Elk Grove Village, Lincolnshire, Mount Prospect, Prospect Heights, Rolling Meadows, Vernon Hills, Wheeling
Far NW Suburbs	Algonquin, Antioch, Barrington, Carpentersville, Cary, Crystal Lake, Dundee, Grayslake, Hoffman Estates, Huntley, Ingleside Island Lake, Lake In The Hills, Lake Villa, Lake Zurich, Libertyville, Marengo, McHenry, Mundelein, Palatine, Round Lake, Schaumburg, Spring Grove, Streamwood, Wauconda, Woodstock
West Suburbs	Addison, Aurora, Bartlett, Batavia, Bellwood, Berwyn, Bloomingdale, Bolingbrook, Broadview, Brookfield, Carol Stream, Clarendon Hills, Darien, Downers Grove, Elgin, Elmhurst, Elmwood Park, Forest Park, Geneva, Gilberts, Glen Ellyn, Hampshire, Hinsdale, Itasca, La Grange, La Grange Park, Lisle, Lombard, Medinah, Melrose Park, Mooseheart, Naperville, North Aurora, Oak Brook, Oak Park, River Forest, River Grove, Riverside, Roselle, Saint Charles, Schiller Park, South Elgin, Villa Park, Warrenville, West Chicago, Westchester, Western Springs, Westmont, Wheaton, Willowbrook, Winfield, Wood Dale, Woodridge
South Suburbs*	Blue Island, Bolingbrook, Braidwood, Calumet City, Chicago Heights, Crest Hill, Crete, Dolton, Elwood, Flossmoor, Frankfort, Glenwood, Hazel Crest, Hickory Hills, Homer Glen, Homewood, Joliet, Lemont, Mokena, New Lenox, Oak Forest, Oak Lawn, Olympia Fields, Orland Park, Palos Heights, Park Forest, Plainfield, Richton Park, Romeoville, South Holland, Tinley Park

*Throughout this report, information about the South Suburbs is not shown when there are insufficient respondents to produce reliable estimates.

[25] Some definitions of Metropolitan Chicago include adjacent communities in Indiana and Wisconsin; these are not included for purposes of this study, which is focused on the catchment area of the Jewish United Fund/Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago.

Figure 2.1. Map of Jewish households in Metropolitan Chicago

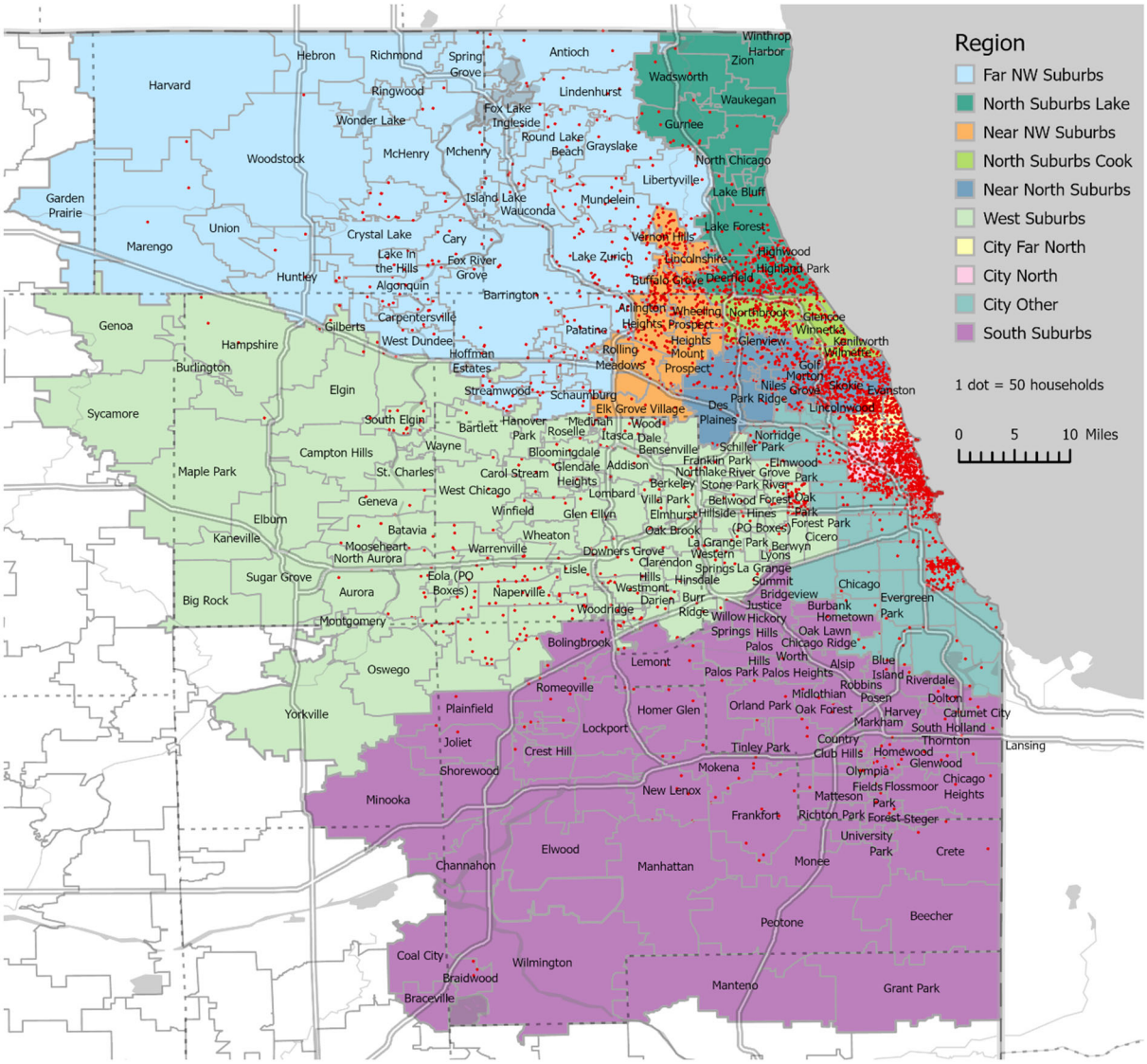
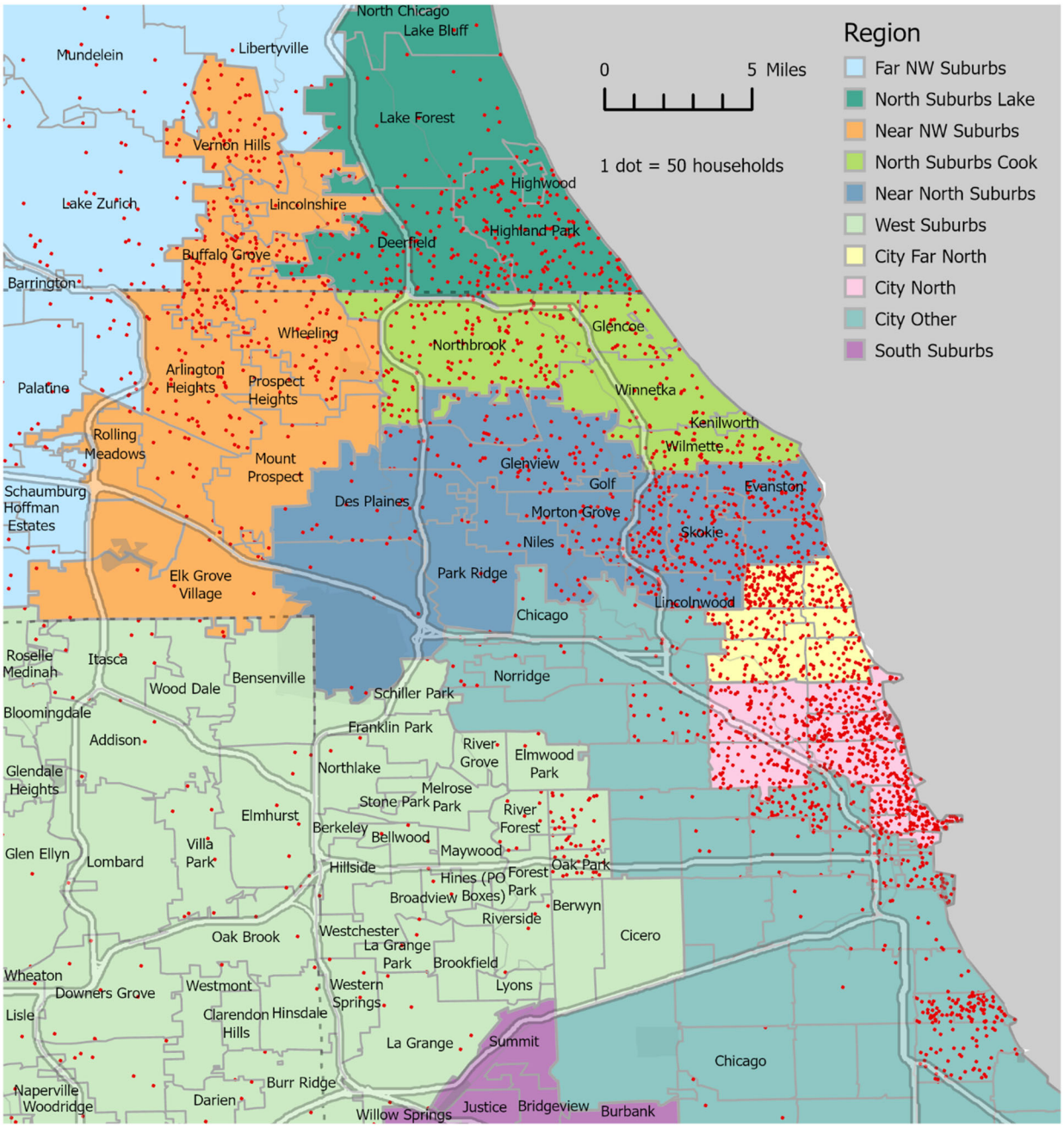


Figure 2.2. Map of Jewish households in Metropolitan Chicago, closeup



The region with the largest percentage of Jewish households and Jewish individuals is City North, with 18% of Jewish households and 16% of Jewish individuals, followed closely by the Near North Suburbs, with 14% of Jewish households and 14% of Jewish individuals (Table 2.2). Three percent of Jewish households reside in South Suburbs.

Table 2.2. Distribution of Jewish households and individuals across regions

	Jewish individuals (%)	Jewish households (%)	All people in Jewish households (%)
City Far North	12	10	11
City North	16	18	16
City Other	10	11	12
Near North Suburbs	14	14	13
North Suburbs Cook	10	8	9
North Suburbs Lake	10	9	9
Near NW Suburbs	11	10	10
Far NW Suburbs	7	8	8
West Suburbs	8	9	9
South Suburbs	3	3	3
Total	100	100	100

The Jewish density, measured as the percentage of all people who are Jewish, varies widely across regions (Table 2.3). The area with the highest Jewish density in Metropolitan Chicago is in North Suburbs Cook, where Jewish individuals constitute 32% of all individuals in the region and Jewish households constitute 40% of all households.

Table 2.3. Share of each region's population that is Jewish[26]

	Percent of individuals in region who are Jewish (%)	Percent of households in region that are Jewish (%)
Metropolitan Chicago	3.8	5.7
City Far North	11	12
City North	10	14
City Other	2	3
Near North Suburbs	11	17
North Suburbs Cook	32	40
North Suburbs Lake	10	15
Near NW Suburbs	11	14
Far NW Suburbs	2	4
West Suburbs	1	2
South Suburbs	1	1

Table 2.4 shows the change in the number of Jewish households and Jewish individuals from 2010 to 2020. Because the data from 2010 only included seven regions rather than the 10 examined in 2020, the following table uses the 2010 regional definitions to facilitate meaningful comparisons.

The only region that experienced a decline in Jewish population since 2010 was the Near North Suburbs, which saw a 16% decline in the number of Jewish households. The Jewish population of all other regions increased. The two largest regional Jewish population increases took place within the city of Chicago and not in the suburban regions. The most dramatic Jewish population increase,

[26] Calculated from US Census 2019 American Community Survey 5-year estimates, https://data.census.gov/cedsci/

57%, was in City Other, including neighborhoods that in the past had with limited Jewish population and Jewish infrastructure. Jewish households in City North, an area with a strong Jewish infrastructure, increased by almost one third (32%).

Table 2.4. Change in estimates of Jewish households, 2010-20

2010 Region name	2020 Region name	2010	2020	% Change
City North	City Far North, City North	37,200	49,000	32%
Rest of Chicago	City Other	12,700	20,000	57%
Near North Suburbs	Near North Suburbs	28,900	24,400	-16%
North Shore	North Suburbs Cook, North Suburbs Lake	23,800	29,800	25%
Northwest Suburbs	Near NW Suburbs, Far NW Suburbs	26,900	31,500	17%
Western Suburbs	West Suburbs	14,900	15,500	4%
Southern Suburbs	South Suburbs	3,700	5,600	--

Geography and demographics

Jewish demographics vary across regional areas. In this section, we examine regional differences by age, lifestage, presence of children in the household, and demographic subgroups.

Suburban regions have the largest concentration of Jewish adults over the age of 65, including the Near North Suburbs (35% of Jewish individuals), North Suburbs Cook (31%), Near NW Suburbs (29%), and Far NW Suburbs (35%) (Table 2.5).

The region with the highest concentration of children ages 0-17 is City Far North (25% of Jewish individuals). The three city regions have the largest concentration of Jewish adults ages 30-49: 23% of Jewish individuals in City Far North, 27% in City North, and 30% in City Other.

Table 2.5. Distribution of Jewish individuals by age within geographic regions

	Ages 0-17 (%)	Ages 18-29 (%)	Ages 30-49 (%)	Ages 50-64 (%)	Ages 65+ (%)	Total (%)
All Jewish individuals	17	14	19	23	26	100
City Far North	25	16	23	18	18	100
City North	16	18	27	19	19	100
City Other	18	18	30	20	14	100
Near North Suburbs	13	14	12	27	35	100
North Suburbs Cook	21	11	14	23	31	100
North Suburbs Lake	18	8	15	27	32	100
Near NW Suburbs	16	13	17	24	29	100
Far NW Suburbs	8	16	13	29	35	100
West Suburbs	21	16	19	23	22	100
South Suburbs	--	--	--	--	--	---

Jewish households with minor children represent a quarter (25%) of all households in Metropolitan Chicago (Table 2.6a, row 1, column 1). The West Suburbs includes the largest concentration of households with minor children (35%), followed by City Far North (27%) and City Other (28%).

Couples without children represent 35% of all Jewish households (Table 2.6a, row 1, column 2). The largest concentration reside in the Far NW Suburbs (46%) and North Suburbs Lake (42%). Singles represent 27% of all Jewish households (Table 2.6a, row 1, column 3). The largest concentration of singles reside in City North (43%).

Table 2.6a. Distribution of households by type within geographic regions

	Households with minor children (%)	Couples without children (%)	Singles (%)	Multigenerational (%)	Total (%)
All Jewish households	25	35	27	12	100
City Far North	27	29	35	9	100
City North	19	34	43	5	100
City Other	28	35	28	9	100
Near North Suburbs	20	35	28	17	100
North Suburbs Cook	25	38	21	16	100
North Suburbs Lake	26	42	20	12	100
Near NW Suburbs	27	30	27	16	100
Far NW Suburbs	18	46	22	14	100
West Suburbs	35	32	18	15	100
South Suburbs	--	--	--	--	100

Table 2.6b provides more detail than Table 2.6a about the distribution of households with children and young adults in the regions. Jewish households with children are divided by the age of their oldest child, with column 1 showing households whose oldest child is not yet in kindergarten (9% of all Jewish households), and column 2 showing households whose oldest child is in grades K-12 (16% of all Jewish households).

The regions with the largest concentration of Jewish Pre-K parent households are City Far North (14% of all Jewish households in the region), City Other (13%), and West Suburbs (12%). The regions with the largest share of Jewish households with children K-12 are the West Suburbs (23%), the Near NW Suburbs (20%), North Suburbs Cook (19%) and North Suburbs Lake (18%).

Jewish households comprised of young couples or singles under age 40 primarily reside in the three city regions. Within City Far North, 14% of Jewish households are couples ages 22-39 and another 14% are singles ages 22-39. Within City North, 17% of Jewish households are couples ages 22-39 and another 23% are singles ages 22-39. Within City Other, 16% of Jewish households are couples ages 22-39 and another 16% are singles ages 22-39.

Table 2.6b. Distribution of households with children and young adults within regions

	Parents of Pre-K (%)	Parents of K-12 (%)	Couples age 22-39 (%)	Singles age 22-39 (%)
All Jewish households	9	16	6	6
City Far North	14	13	14	14
City North	9	10	17	23
City Other	13	16	16	16
Near North Suburbs	5	15	1	3
North Suburbs Cook	6	19	1	0
North Suburbs Lake	8	18	3	2
Near NW Suburbs	7	20	1	2
Far NW Suburbs	2	15	3	5
West Suburbs	12	23	2	5
South Suburbs	--	--	--	--

Key demographic subgroups are not equally distributed among all regions (Table 2.7). The Near NW Suburbs include the largest concentration of Jewish households in which someone is Russian speaking (22% of households in the region). City Far North and City Other include the largest concentration of Jewish households that include someone who is LGBTQ, someone who is non-white or Hispanic, and someone who identifies as a person of color.

Table 2.7. Distribution of household demographic subgroups within regions

	Russian speaking (%)	LGBTQ (%)	Israeli citizen (%)	Non-white or Hispanic (%)	Person of color (%)
All Jewish households	11	9	3	14	7
City Far North	9	21	8	25	14
City North	5	11	4	15	7
City Other	7	17	2	24	14
Near North Suburbs	16	6	5	9	5
North Suburbs Cook	14	8	4	9	4
North Suburbs Lake	7	4	3	6	1
Near NW Suburbs	22	6	5	10	1
Far NW Suburbs	14	8	1	9	5
West Suburbs	3	7	1	14	7
South Suburbs	--	--	--	--	--

Length of residence

About half of Jewish adults (52%) were born in the Metropolitan Chicago area (Table 2.8). About one-in-three Jewish adults (33%) were born elsewhere in the United States. The remainder of Jewish adults were born in another country including 9% in Russia or the Former Soviet Union, 1% in Israel, and 1% in Canada. Four percent of Jewish adults were born elsewhere: 2% in a European country, 1% in an African country, 1% in an Asian country, and less than 1% elsewhere (not shown in table). Nationally, 90% of Jewish adults were born in the United States and 10% were born in another country, including 3% who were born in the Former Soviet Union, 1% who were born in Israel, and 1% who were born in Canada.[27]

Table 2.8. Birthplace of Jewish adults in Metropolitan Chicago

	Jewish adults (%)
Metropolitan Chicago area	52
Elsewhere in the United States	33
Russia or former Soviet Union	9
Israel	1
Canada	1
Another country	4

[27] Pew Research Center, 2021.

About 4% of Jewish adults who currently reside in Metropolitan Chicago have lived there less than five years, and another 6% have lived in Metropolitan Chicago between five and nine years (Table 2.9). Almost two-in-five Jewish adults, 38%, have lived in Metropolitan Chicago for 50 years or more, including many who were born in Metropolitan Chicago.

Table 2.9. Length of residence of Jewish adults in Metropolitan Chicago

Length of residence	Jewish adults (%)
0-4 years	4
5-9 years	6
10-19 years	9
20-29 years	17
30-39 years	15
40-49 years	11
50 + years	38

The three city regions include the largest concentration of new residents (Table 2.10). Eleven percent of Jewish adults in City Far North, 11% of those in City North, and 14% in City Other, have lived in Metropolitan Chicago for less than five years.

Jewish young adults are most likely to be new residents of Metropolitan Chicago. Among couples ages 22-39, 26% have lived in the area for less than five years. Among Jewish singles ages 22-39, 29% have lived in the area for less than five years.

Table 2.10. Length of residence of Jewish adults by region and lifestage

	0-4 years (%)	5-19 years (%)	20+ years (%)	Total (%)
All Jewish adults	4	15	81	100
Region				
City Far North	11	20	70	100
City North	11	27	62	100
City Other	14	25	61	100
Near North Suburbs	3	9	88	100
North Suburbs Cook	< 1	9	91	100
North Suburbs Lake	2	10	88	100
Near NW Suburbs	4	10	86	100
Far NW Suburbs	< 1	10	90	100
West Suburbs	3	15	82	100
South Suburbs	--	--	--	100
Lifestage				
Parent Pre-K	8	40	53	100
Parent K-12	1	21	78	100
Couple 22-39	26	37	37	100
Couple 40-69	1	5	94	100
Couple 70+	< 1	6	94	100
Single 22-39	29	31	41	100
Single 40-69	2	10	88	100
Single 70+	< 1	3	96	100
Multigenerational	4	10	86	100

While the tables above examine the length of residence anywhere in the Metropolitan Chicago area, the tables below focus on internal mobility: movement within the area. This analysis of internal mobility includes Jewish households who moved from one Metropolitan Chicago address to another one.

More than one-in-four (28%) Jewish adults have lived at their current address for less than five years, and another 15% have lived at their current address for five to nine years (Table 2.11). Below, we refer to these two groups, representing 42% of Jewish adults, as "recent movers."

Table 2.11. Length of residence of Jewish adults at current address

Length of residence at current address	Jewish adults (%)
0-4 years	28
5-9 years	15
10-19 years	23
20-29 years	18
30-39 years	8
40-49 years	4
50 + years	4

Recent movers include Jewish adults who arrived from outside Metropolitan Chicago, have moved from another region in Metropolitan Chicago, or have moved within the same region in which they currently reside. In Table 2.12 below, we look at where Jewish adults moved from in four groups: all city regions combined (City Far North, City North, City Other), all suburban regions combined, unspecified part of Metropolitan Chicago, and outside Metropolitan Chicago.

Among the 42% who are recent movers, 40% moved from a city region to their current address; 40% moved from a suburb to their current address; 5% moved from an unspecified location in Metropolitan Chicago; and 12% moved from outside the area.

Two of the city regions included the largest concentration of recent movers: 66% of Jewish adults in City North and 56% of Jewish adults in City Other recently changed addresses. In both regions, about three quarters of recent movers moved from elsewhere in the city.

In all suburbs, the majority of recent movers moved from elsewhere in the suburbs rather than from a city to a suburb. For example, among recent movers who currently live in Near North Suburbs, 22% moved from the city, and 66% moved from another suburb.

Table 2.12. Current region of recent movers and where they moved from

	Jewish adults in this region who moved within last 0-9 years (%)	Of recent movers, moved from city (%)	Of recent movers, moved from suburbs (%)	Of recent movers, moved from unspecified area (%)	Of recent movers, moved from outside Metro Chicago (%)	Total (%)
All Jewish adults	42	40	40	5	12	100
Current region						
City Far North	46	67	13	4	15	100
City North	66	73	15	2	11	100
City Other	56	75	9	4	13	100
Near North Suburbs	32	22	66	3	9	100
North Suburbs Cook	33	18	76	6	3	100
North Suburbs Lake	31	13	71	3	13	100
Near NW Suburbs	42	12	60	12	17	100
Far NW Suburbs	37	11	73	3	11	100
West Suburbs	43	9	70	2	21	100
South Suburbs	--	--	--	--	--	100

Second homes

Ten percent of Jewish households live outside of Metropolitan Chicago for some part of the year. The majority of these households (8% of all Jewish households) consider Metropolitan Chicago to be their primary residence. Of those who have a second home, 79% consider their Chicago-area homes to be their primary residence and spend at least six months per year in Chicago.

CHAPTER 3. JEWISH IDENTITY

The demographic and geographic diversity of Jewish adults in Metropolitan Chicago is reflected in the variety of ways in which its members engage in Jewish life. Examining how Jewish adults think about and act upon their Jewish identities can serve as a valuable lens through which to understand the population and the ways in which Jewish life can be enhanced.

Key findings

- In the Metropolitan Chicago Jewish community, we have identified five categories of Jewish engagement that describe patterns of participation in Jewish life:
  - **Personal:** Those in the Personal category, about one quarter (27%) of all Jewish adults in Metropolitan Chicago, participate occasionally in some aspects of Jewish life and tend to engage much more in home-based activities than organizational activities.
  - **Communal:** Those in the Communal category, 21% of Jewish adults, are highly involved in home, ritual, and organizational behaviors.
  - **Holiday:** Those in the Holiday category, 19% of Jewish adults, are highly involved in holiday observance.
  - **Immersed:** Those in the Immersed category, 19% of Jewish adults, are highly involved in all elements of Jewish life.
  - **Participant:** Those in the Participant category, 13% of Jewish adults, have high levels of participation in Jewish programs and moderate participation in other elements of Jewish life.
- The majority of Orthodox Jews (79%) are in the Immersed category, and 11% are in the Communal category.
- Conservative and Reform Jews are part of every engagement group. One third (34%) of Conservative Jewish adults are in the Immersed group, and 26% are in the Communal group. One third (36%) of Reform Jews are in the Communal group.
- Almost half of Jewish adults with no specific denomination (46%) are in the Personal category, but Jews with no denomination are included in each of the engagement groups.
- Jewish adults of each demographic category—region, family status, and age—are part of every engagement group.
- Inmarried Jewish adults are more likely to be in the Immersed (30%) and Communal (28%) groups, compared to intermarried and single Jewish adults. Intermarried Jewish adults are more likely to be in the Personal group (42%) than inmarried and single adults.
- In City Far North, 43% of Jewish adults are in the Immersed group—the largest concentration of Immersed Jews of any region. City Far North has equal shares of Jewish adults in the Personal, Participant, and Holiday groups (12%) and somewhat more in the Communal group (22%). In contrast, West Suburbs, mostly comprised of Jewish adults in the Personal group (46% of Jewish adults in the region), has the lowest percentage (10%) of Jewish adults in the Immersed group.
- Jewish parents of minor children are more likely to be in the Immersed group than Jewish adults without minor children. Of Jewish Pre-K parents, 28% are in the Immersed group, and of Jewish K-12 parents, 29% are in the Immersed group. Jewish non-parents are more likely to be in the Personal (27%) and Participant (15%) groups compared to Jewish parents.

- Jewish singles ages 40-69 include a larger share of those in the Personal group (38%) than any other lifestage.
- Couples in Jewish households ages 22-39 make up a larger share of those in the Communal group (36%) than any other lifestage.
- Jewish Pre-K parents include the largest share of Orthodox Jews: 10% are Modern Orthodox and 14% are Other Orthodox.
- Of couples in Jewish households, those ages 40-69 are most likely to be Reform (38%) or no denomination (40%), and those ages 22-39 are most likely to be no denomination (56%).
- Overall, 82% of Metropolitan Chicago Jewish adults feel that leading an ethical and moral life is an essential part of being Jewish, compared to 72% of US Jews.[28] The majority of all engagement groups think this aspect of Jewish life is essential.
- Of all Metropolitan Chicago Jewish adults, 77% feel that remembering the Holocaust is an essential part of being Jewish; this is almost identical to the share of all US Jews (76%).[29] Jewish adults in all engagement groups were similar in their responses.
- Of all Metropolitan Chicago Jewish adults, 59% feel that working for justice and equality in society is an essential part of being Jewish; this is identical to the share of all US Jews (59%).[30] Jewish adults in all engagement groups were similar in their responses.
- The regions with the highest individual intermarriage rates are City Other (57%), the Far NW Suburbs (43%), and the West Suburbs (64%). Intermarriage rates are lowest in City Far North (21%), North Suburbs Lake (20%), and the Near NW Suburbs (22%).

Measuring Jewish identity and engagement

The best-known system to categorize Jewish identity is denominational affiliation. In the past, Jewish denominational categories closely correlated with measures of Jewish engagement, including behaviors and attitudes.[31] Because these labels are self-assigned, however, their meaning varies from one individual to another. In addition, an increasing number of Jews do not identify with any specific denomination (44% of Jewish adults in Metropolitan Chicago and 32% nationally); therefore, denominational labels are limited in their ability to convey Jewish behavior and attitudes. In parallel, declining synagogue membership, long a proxy for denomination affiliation, has become less meaningful as a sole marker of affiliation.

For this report, we define Jewish engagement as participation in any aspect of Jewish life, including ritual activities, cultural activities, and involvement in organizational life. In contrast, Jewish denomination focuses primarily on ritual behavior. In this chapter, we introduce a way to measure Jewish engagement that captures multiple dimensions: the Index of Jewish Engagement.[32] A set of categories reflective of the Chicago Jewish community were specifically developed for this study and were based on *behavior* rather than self-identification. This Index was not used in previous studies of the Metropolitan Chicago Jewish community.

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[28] Pew Research Center, 2021.
[29] Pew Research Center, 2021.
[30] Pew Research Center, 2021.
[31] Himmelfarb, H. S. (1982). Research on American Jewish identity and identification: Progress, pitfalls, and prospects. In *Understanding American Jewry*, ed. Marshall Sklare. Waltham, MA: Brandeis University.
[32] Also see Aronson, J. K., Saxe, L., Kadushin, C., Boxer, M., & Brookner, M. (2018). A new approach to understanding contemporary Jewish engagement. *Contemporary Jewry*. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12397-018-9271-8

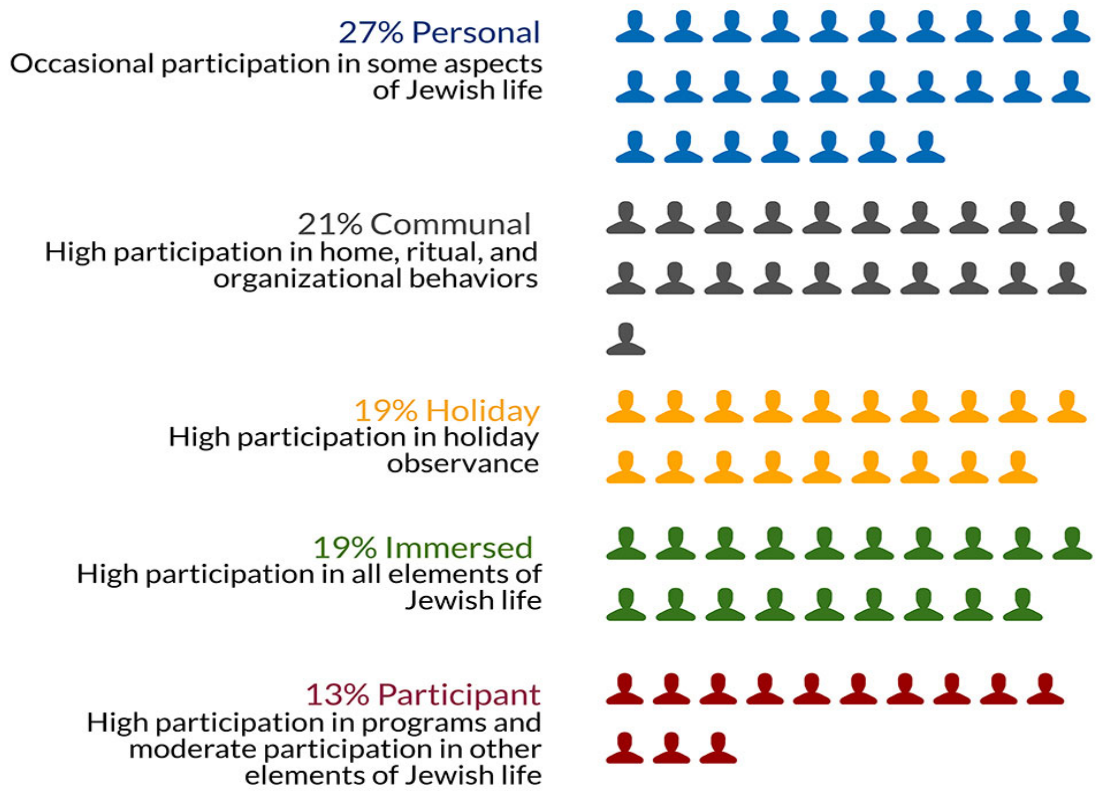
Below we describe the Index of Jewish Engagement and examine how it compares to Jewish denomination. We then explore the demographics of the Jewish engagement groups and how those groups differ in terms of their attitudes about Judaism. The chapter concludes with additional information about denomination, Jewish heritage, and intermarriage.

Patterns of Jewish engagement

The primary purpose of the Index of Jewish Engagement is to demonstrate a full range of Jewish engagement for all Jewish adults that combines many individual measures of Jewish engagement, such as synagogue membership or program participation, which appear elsewhere in this report. By identifying the patterns that develop around measures of Jewish engagement, we can better understand the unique ways in which Jewish people express their Jewish identities and the potential constituencies that exist for different types of Jewish connections.

In the Metropolitan Chicago Jewish community, we have identified five categories of Jewish engagement that describe patterns of participation in Jewish life (Figure 3.1):

Figure 3.1. Patterns of Jewish engagement



The five patterns differ in terms of prevalent types of Jewish behaviors and in the degree of participation in those behaviors. As shown in Table 3.1, the Jewish behaviors across the five engagement patterns vary widely, but all include prevalent behaviors that represent a connection to Jewish life. In this table, the darker the box, the higher the proportion of people who engage in that behavior. Although the leftmost groups in the table in general have lower rates of participation in selected behaviors relative to those on the right side of the table, the arrangement of the groups in this table does not represent a simple high-to-low continuum. As one example, Jews in the Participant category are *much less likely* than Jews in the Holiday category to attend High Holiday services (1% versus 60%) but are *more* likely than Jews in the Holiday group to attend a Jewish-sponsored program (88% versus 0% respectively).

Each of the behaviors in this chart is described in detail elsewhere in this report. Due to differences in calculations, these numbers may not exactly match the numbers reported elsewhere.

Table 3.1. Jewish behaviors and Jewish engagement

	Personal (%)	Participant (%)	Holiday (%)	Communal (%)	Immersed (%)
All Jewish adults	27	13	19	21	19
Home holidays					
Attended seder, 2020	22	45	68	85	92
Lights Hanukkah candles, typical year	52	76	91	97	99
Ritual behaviors					
Shabbat candles/dinner, ever	9	28	57	73	94
Almost always or always	0	1	10	16	55
Services in past half year,	8	35	81	100	94
High Holiday services 2020 (any setting)	0	1	60	94	80
Keeps kosher at any level	8	9	33	34	76
Organization behaviors (past year)					
Congregation member	0	6	26	63	79
Organization member	3	15	6	33	47
Informal group member	1	10	5	18	29
Attend Jewish-sponsored program, ever	1	88	0	91	87
10 or more times	0	3	0	9	27
Volunteer for Jewish organization	0	9	2	26	45
Donated to Jewish organization	23	48	64	80	96
Individual behaviors, frequently (past year)					
Talk about Jewish topic	4	20	28	29	88
Seek out news about Israel	6	16	23	10	75
Read Jewish publications	2	9	14	6	84
Engage with Jewish-focused culture	1	9	16	7	71
Eat Jewish foods	7	14	24	21	70

Legend	0-19%	20-39%	40-59%	60-79%	80-100%

How does the Index of Jewish Engagement compare to Jewish denomination?

Although denomination and the Index of Jewish Engagement are related, the two differ in important ways. The Index incorporates a range of cultural and organizational Jewish behaviors, not only ritual and religious behavior. One can also observe in the Index the considerable variation that exists within denominations, particularly among Conservative and Reform Jews. Finally, the Index allows a better understanding of those with no denomination, the fastest-growing segment of the Jewish community.

A comparison of Jewish denominations and the Index of Jewish Engagement reveals that, aside from Orthodox Jews, every denomination is represented in every engagement group (Table 3.2). The majority of Orthodox Jews (81%) are in the Immersed category, and 12% are in the Communal category. One third of Conservative Jewish adults (34%) are in the Immersed group, and 26% are in the Communal group. One third of Reform Jews (36%) are in the Communal group.

Almost half of Jews with no specific denomination (46%) are in the Personal category, but Jews with no denomination are included in all of the engagement groups.

More information about Jewish denominations appears later in this chapter.

Table 3.2. Denominational distribution within each Jewish engagement category

	Personal (%)	Participant (%)	Holiday (%)	Communal (%)	Immersed (%)	Total (%)
All Jewish adults	27	13	19	21	19	100
Orthodox	0	< 1	7	12	81	100
Conservative	13	8	19	26	34	100
Reform	14	14	22	36	14	100
Other denomination	16	5	17	37	25	100
No denomination	46	20	16	10	8	100

Jewish engagement groups by demographic categories

The tables below illustrate Jewish engagement by select demographic categories. In all cases, the top row of each table shows the distribution of Jewish engagement groups among all Metropolitan Chicago Jewish adults. The subsequent rows indicate what proportion of each demographic group is classified as part of each engagement group.

Although the descriptions below emphasize the differences between the engagement groups, it is important to notice that Jewish adults of each demographic group—region, family status, and age—are part of every engagement group.

In City Far North, 43% of Jewish adults are in the Immersed group—the largest concentration of Immersed Jews of any region (Table 3.3). City Far North has equal shares of Jewish adults in the Personal, Participant, and Holiday groups (12%) and somewhat more in the Communal group (22%). In contrast, West Suburbs, mostly comprised of Jewish adults in the Personal group (46% of Jewish adults in the region), has the lowest percentage (10%) of those in the Immersed group.

Table 3.3. Region and Jewish engagement

	Personal (%)	Participant (%)	Holiday (%)	Communal (%)	Immersed (%)	Total (%)
All Jewish adults	27	13	19	21	19	100
City Far North	12	12	12	22	43	100
City North	26	16	16	24	17	100
City Other	27	17	18	24	13	100
Near North Suburbs	31	11	15	19	23	100
North Suburbs Cook	19	17	18	25	21	100
North Suburbs Lake	20	14	15	27	24	100
Near NW Suburbs	20	15	26	19	20	100
Far NW Suburbs	36	11	24	21	7	100
West Suburbs	46	8	19	18	10	100
South Suburbs	--	--	--	--	--	100

Jewish adults ages 18-34 include the largest share in the Personal group (30%) and the smallest share in the Holiday group (12%) (Table 3.4). Jewish adults ages 50-64 include the largest share who are in the Immersed group (24%). Jewish adults ages 75 and older include the smallest share in the Personal group (21%).

Table 3.4. Age and Jewish engagement

	Personal (%)	Participant (%)	Holiday (%)	Communal (%)	Immersed (%)	Total (%)
All Jewish adults	27	13	19	21	19	100
18-34	30	15	12	24	18	100
35-49	27	8	21	25	20	100
50-64	26	12	18	20	24	100
65-74	25	17	17	23	18	100
75+	21	20	18	23	18	100

Jewish parents of minor children are more likely to be in the Immersed group than Jewish adults without minor children (Table 3.5). Jewish non-parents are more likely to be in the Personal (27%) and Participant (15%) groups compared to Jewish parents.

Table 3.5. Parent status and Jewish engagement

	Personal (%)	Participant (%)	Holiday (%)	Communal (%)	Immersed (%)	Total (%)
All Jewish adults	27	13	19	21	19	100
Parent of minor child	21	9	19	23	28	100
Not parent	27	15	17	22	18	100

Similar shares of Jewish Pre-K and K-12 parents are in the Immersed group (28% and 29% respectively) (Table 3.6). Jewish singles ages 40-69 include a larger share of those in the Personal group (38%) than any other lifestage. Couples ages 22-39 include a larger share of those in the Communal group (36%) than any other lifestage.

Table 3.6. Lifestage and Jewish engagement

	Personal (%)	Participant (%)	Holiday (%)	Communal (%)	Immersed (%)	Total (%)
All Jewish adults	27	13	19	21	19	100
Parent Pre-K	22	9	19	22	28	100
Parent K-12	21	9	18	23	29	100
Couple 22-39	31	12	11	36	10	100
Couple 40-69	28	15	20	19	17	100
Couple 70+	23	18	17	23	19	100
Single 22-39	28	17	15	24	16	100
Single 40-69	38	13	17	13	19	100
Single 70+	24	18	21	19	17	100
Multigenerational	24	14	16	24	22	100

Inmarried Jewish adults are more likely to be in the Immersed (30%) and Communal (28%) groups, compared to intermarried Jewish adults and single Jewish adults (Table 3.7). Intermarried Jewish adults are more likely to be in the Personal group (42%) than inmarried Jewish adults and single Jewish adults.

Table 3.7. Marital status and Jewish engagement

	Personal (%)	Participant (%)	Holiday (%)	Communal (%)	Immersed (%)	Total (%)
All Jewish adults	27	13	19	21	19	100
Not married	32	15	17	18	17	100
Inmarried	14	11	17	28	30	100
Intermarried	42	17	18	17	7	100

Jewish adults who are well-off financially are less likely to be in the Personal group (21%) compared to those who are less well-off (Table 3.8). Jewish adults who are financially struggling are least likely to be in the Participant group (9%).

Table 3.8. Financial situation and Jewish engagement

	Personal (%)	Participant (%)	Holiday (%)	Communal (%)	Immersed (%)	Total (%)
All Jewish adults	27	13	19	21	19	100
Struggling	29	9	19	20	23	100
Enough	27	12	21	22	18	100
Extra	30	14	13	23	20	100
Well-off	21	19	15	25	19	100

Jewish engagement of key demographic groups

Members of key demographic groups engage in Jewish life in different ways (Table 3.9). Jewish adults who grew up in Russian-speaking homes are more likely to be in the Holiday engagement group (27%) than other Jewish adults, and less likely to be in the Participant and Communal groups. There is no significant difference in Jewish engagement when comparing Israeli citizens and those who are not Israel citizens, and there is no significant difference in Jewish engagement for LGBTQ Jewish adults and those who are not LGBTQ. Due to limitations in sample size, Jewish engagement for Jews of color could not be estimated.

Table 3.9. Key demographic groups and Jewish engagement

	Personal (%)	Participant (%)	Holiday (%)	Communal (%)	Immersed (%)	Total (%)
All Jewish adults	27	13	19	21	19	100
Israeli citizens	26	14	10	19	30	100
LGBTQ	25	21	11	26	17	100
Grew up in Russian-speaking home	28	8	27	16	21	100

Demographic composition of Jewish engagement groups

In contrast to the previous section that shows the distribution of Jewish adults across the five engagement groups, this section shows the proportion of Jewish adults *within* each engagement group that has select demographic characteristics. The tables in this section are presented as columns (totals going down) rather than rows (totals going across). The previous section answers the question: How do Jewish adults in various categories engage Jewishly? This section answers the question: What are the demographic characteristics of Jewish adults in each engagement group?

The Immersed group includes the largest share of Orthodox (29%) and Conservative (29%) Jewish adults, and the smallest share of those with no denomination (15%) (Table 3.10). Almost half of Jewish adults in the Communal group (48%) identify as Reform. More than half of the Participant group (57%) and almost three quarters of the Personal group (71%) have no denomination.

Table 3.10. Denominational distribution within each Jewish engagement category

	All Jewish adults (%)	Personal (%)	Participant (%)	Holiday (%)	Communal (%)	Immersed (%)
Orthodox	7	0	< 1	2	4	29
Conservative	16	8	9	18	20	29
Reform	29	17	31	38	48	22
Other denomination	4	4	2	6	10	6
No denomination	44	71	57	35	18	15
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

Approximately one quarter of Jewish adults in the Immersed group live in City Far North (24%) (Table 3.11).

Table 3.11. Region and Jewish engagement

	All Jewish adults (%)	Personal (%)	Participant (%)	Holiday (%)	Communal (%)	Immersed (%)
City Far North	11	5	10	8	11	24
City North	16	19	22	16	20	15
City Other	9	11	13	11	11	7
Near North Suburbs	15	17	12	12	12	16
North Suburbs Cook	10	7	11	9	10	9
North Suburbs Lake	10	8	10	9	12	12
Near NW Suburbs	12	8	12	15	9	10
Far NW Suburbs	8	10	6	10	7	2
West Suburbs	7	13	4	8	6	3
South Suburbs	--	--	--	--	--	--
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

The Participant group is older than the other engagement groups (Table 3.12). Among Jewish adults in the Participant group, 24% are ages 65 to 74 and 17% are ages 75 or older.

Table 3.12. Age and Jewish engagement

	All Jewish adults (%)	Personal (%)	Participant (%)	Holiday (%)	Communal (%)	Immersed (%)
18-34	12	19	18	11	18	15
35-49	19	19	10	22	20	18
50-64	35	33	30	35	29	39
65-74	21	19	24	20	21	18
75+	13	9	17	12	12	10
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

The largest share of Jewish parents of minor children are in the Immersed group (33%), and the smallest share of Jewish parents are in the Participant group (16%) (Table 3.13).

Table 3.13. Parent status and Jewish engagement

	All Jewish adults (%)	Personal (%)	Participant (%)	Holiday (%)	Communal (%)	Immersed (%)
Parent of minor child	25	19	16	25	24	33
Not parent	75	81	84	75	76	67
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

The Immersed group also includes the largest share of Jewish Pre-K parents (11%) and Jewish K-12 parents (22%) (Table 3.14).

Table 3.14. Lifestage and Jewish engagement

	All Jewish adults (%)	Personal (%)	Participant (%)	Holiday (%)	Communal (%)	Immersed (%)
Parent Pre-K	9	7	5	9	8	11
Parent K-12	17	13	11	17	16	22
Couple 22-39	5	8	6	4	11	3
Couple 40-69	17	17	18	18	14	13
Couple 70+	13	11	17	12	13	12
Single 22-39	5	8	10	7	8	6
Single 40-69	9	13	8	8	5	8
Single 70+	6	5	7	7	5	5
Multigenerational	19	18	19	18	21	21
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

There is a significant relationship between respondents' financial situations and their engagement groups (Table 3.15). The Participant group includes the smallest share of Jewish adults who are struggling financially (15%) and the largest share who are well-off (31%).

Table 3.15. Financial situation and Jewish engagement

	All Jewish adults (%)	Personal (%)	Participant (%)	Holiday (%)	Communal (%)	Immersed (%)
Struggling	22	24	15	24	20	26
Enough	32	32	29	38	30	29
Extra	23	26	25	18	24	23
Well-off	22	18	31	20	25	22
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

Jewish background and Jewish engagement

The tables below illustrate the relationship between Jewish engagement and measures of Jewish background. In these tables, the leftmost column shows the distribution of Jewish background characteristics of all Metropolitan Chicago Jewish adults. These percentages can be compared to the columns on the right, which indicate which proportion of each engagement group appears in those background categories.

Chapter 1 of this report explained the distinctions between Jewish by religion (JBR), Jews of no religion (JNR), and Jews of multiple religions (JMR). Three quarters of all Jewish adults (75%) in Metropolitan Chicago classify as JBR, but among Jews in the Personal category, only 41% are JBR (Table 3.16). Among Immersed Jews, nearly all (98%) are JBR.

Table 3.16. Jewish typology and Jewish engagement

	All Jewish adults (%)	Personal (%)	Participant (%)	Holiday (%)	Communal (%)	Immersed (%)
JBR	75	41	68	84	92	98
JNR	19	46	25	13	5	2
JMR	6	12	7	3	3	< 1
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

The Immersed group includes the largest share of Jewish adults who were raised by two Jewish parents (90%), followed by the Communal group (85%) and the Holiday group (83%) (Table 3.17). In the Participant group, 76% of Jewish adults had two Jewish parents and in the Personal group, 64% of Jewish adults had two Jewish parents.

Jewish adults who had no K-12 Jewish education are most concentrated in the Personal and Participant categories (64% and 57% respectively). The Immersed group includes a larger share of day school alumni (30%) than all other engagement groups. In the Personal group, 5% of Jewish adults attended day school, and 64% had no Jewish education in childhood.

Table 3.17. Jewish background and Jewish engagement

	All Jewish adults (%)	Personal (%)	Participant (%)	Holiday (%)	Communal (%)	Immersed (%)
Jewish parentage						
No Jewish parents	3	2	1	3	5	4
1 Jewish parent	16	34	23	14	10	6
2 Jewish parents	81	64	76	83	85	90
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
Religion raised						
Jewish	77	60	72	80	86	91
Jewish and something else	6	11	8	4	4	2
No religion	12	20	18	14	5	4
Other religion	5	9	2	2	5	3
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
Childhood denomination						
Orthodox	9	3	3	6	5	24
Conservative	31	18	22	33	41	40
Reform	29	31	37	30	34	18
Other denomination	3	3	2	5	3	3
No denomination	28	45	36	26	17	15
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
Jewish education (highest level during K-12)						
Full-time school	12	5	7	8	12	30
Part-time school	39	31	36	44	43	40
None	49	64	57	48	45	30
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

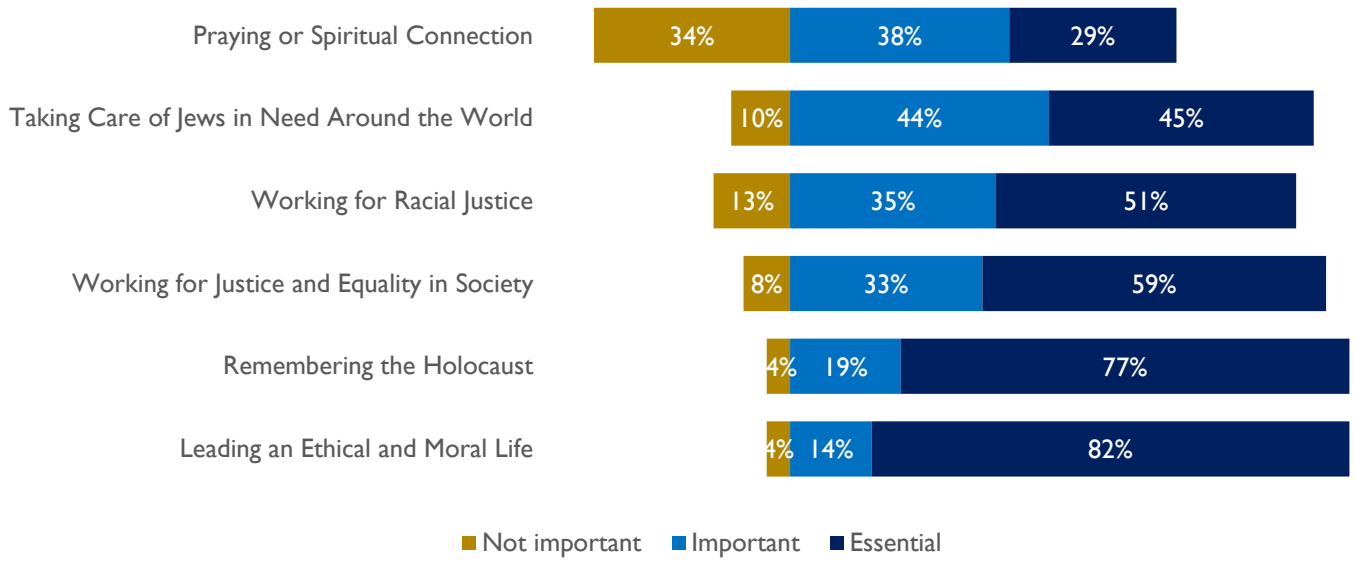
Attitudes about being Jewish and Jewish engagement

Different engagement groups vary in their attitudes about being Jewish: what they think is important about being Jewish, how much being Jewish is part of their daily lives, and to what degree Judaism helps them in times of crisis. The survey asked respondents whether certain aspects of Jewish life were essential, important, or not important to what being Jewish means to them (Figure 3.2). Overall, 82% of Metropolitan Chicago Jewish adults feel that leading an ethical and moral life is essential to being Jewish, compared to 72% of all US Jews.[33]

Seventy-seven percent of Metropolitan Chicago Jewish adults feel that remembering the Holocaust is an essential part of being Jewish; this share is almost identical to the share of all US Jews (76%).[34]

Fifty-nine percent of Metropolitan Chicago Jewish adults feel that working for justice and equality in society is an essential part of being Jewish; this share is identical to the share of all US Jews (59%).[35]

Figure 3.2. Importance of what being Jewish means, all Jewish adults

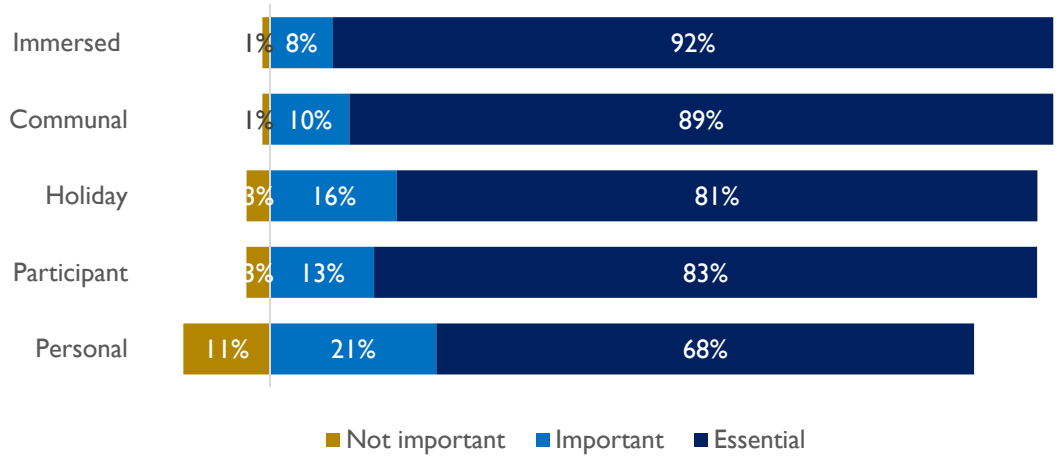


Question text: "How important is each of the following to what being Jewish means to you?"

Although Jewish adults across all engagement groups agree about the importance of some aspects of Judaism, for other aspects there were distinct differences. The majority of all engagement groups think that leading an ethical and moral life is essential to being Jewish, although the share of the Personal group who agrees (68%) is smaller than the other groups (Figure 3.3). Jewish adults in all engagement groups were in agreement about the importance of remembering the Holocaust (Figure Figure 3.4), working for justice and equality (Figure 3.5), and working for racial justice (Figure 3.6).

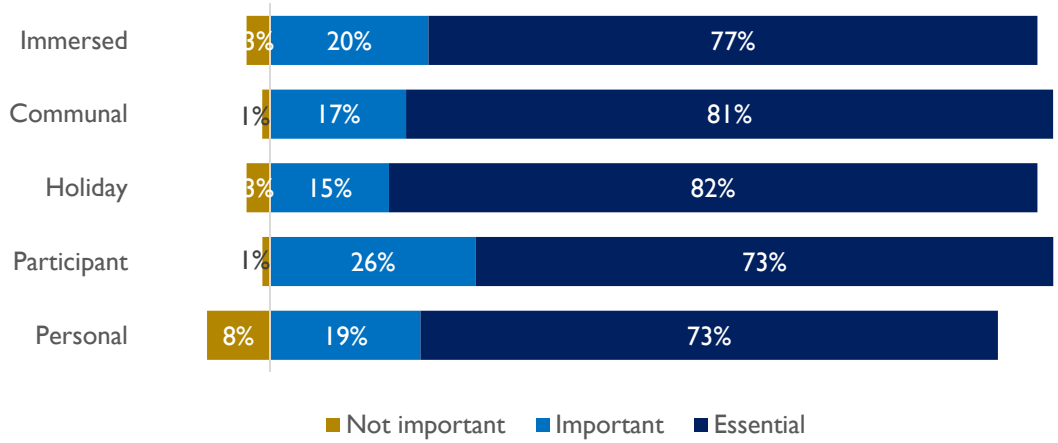
[33] Pew Research Center, 2021.
[34] Pew Research Center, 2021.
[35] Pew Research Center, 2021.

Figure 3.3. Importance of leading an ethical and moral life, by engagement group



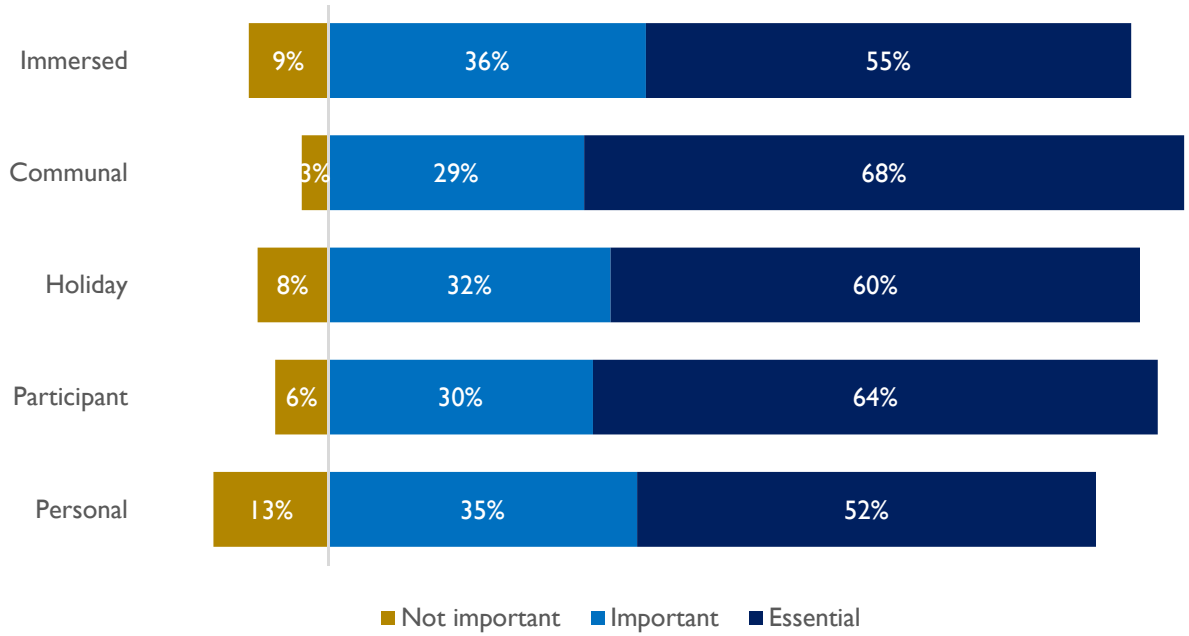
Question text: "How important is each of the following to what being Jewish means to you?"

Figure 3.4. Importance of remembering the Holocaust, by engagement group



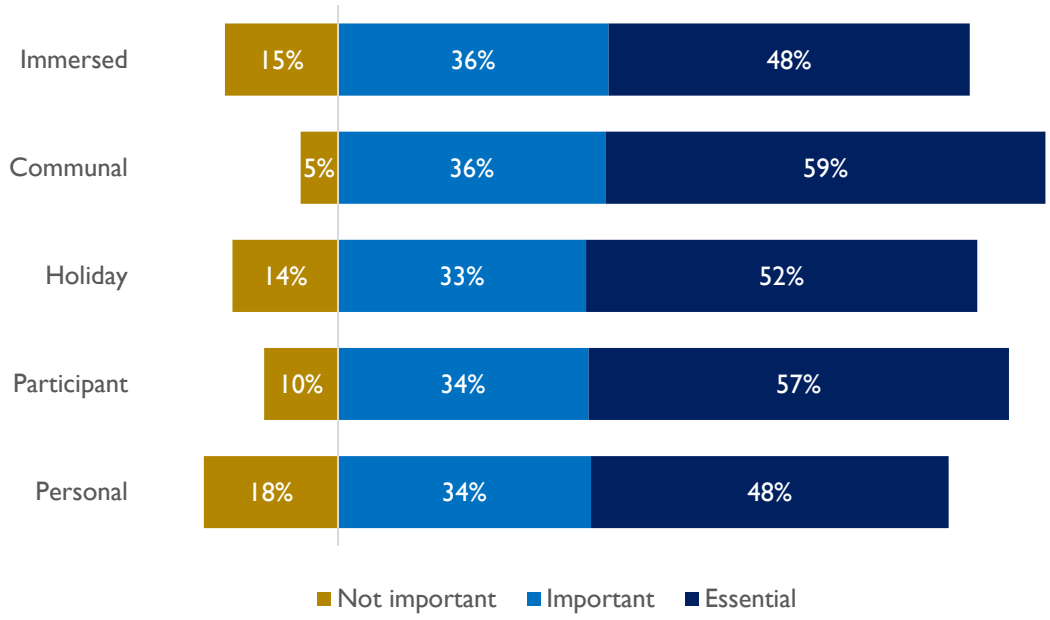
Question text: "How important is each of the following to what being Jewish means to you?"

Figure 3.5. Importance of working for justice and equality in society, by engagement group



Question text: "How important is each of the following to what being Jewish means to you?"

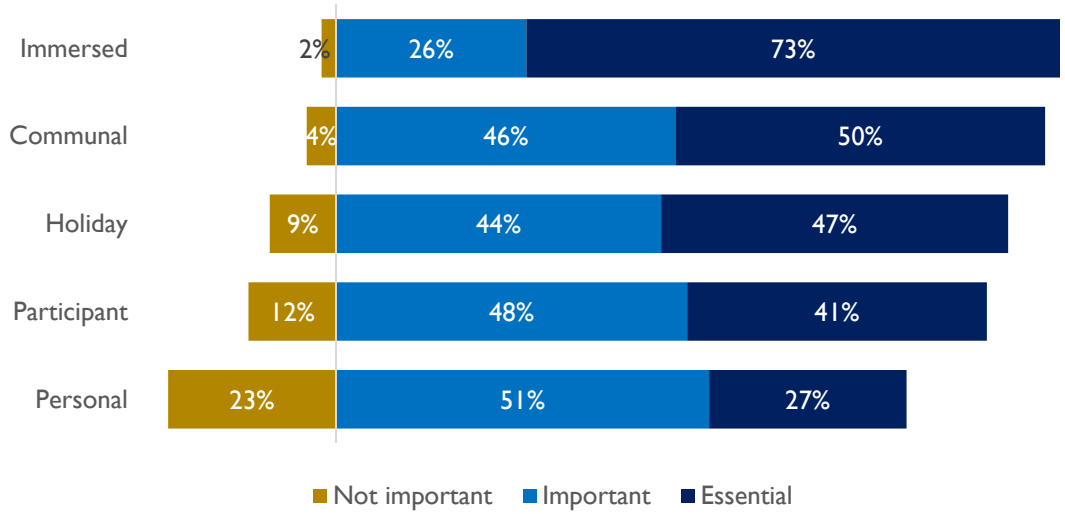
Figure 3.6. Importance of working for racial justice, by engagement group



Question text: "How important is each of the following to what being Jewish means to you?"

Jewish adults vary in their view of the importance of taking care of Jews in need around the world (Figure 3.7). For Jewish adults in the Personal group, 27% consider taking care of other Jews to be an essential part of being Jewish, as do 41% of those in the Participant category, 47% in the Holiday category, and 50% in the Communal category. In comparison, 73% of those in the Immersed category consider taking care of other Jews to be an essential part of being Jewish.

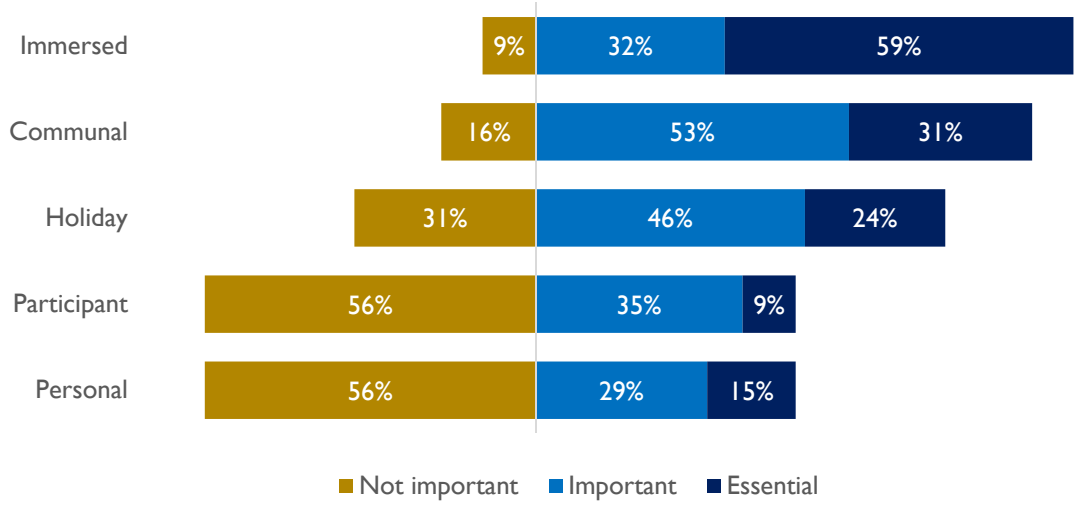
Figure 3.7. Importance of taking care of Jews in need around the world, by engagement group



Question text: "How important is each of the following to what being Jewish means to you?"

The largest variation in Jewish attitudes concern the way that different engagement groups view praying or a spiritual connection (Figure 3.8). For Jewish adults in the Personal and Participant groups, over half (56% of each group) consider this aspect of Judaism to be not important. In contrast, 59% of those in the Immersed category consider praying or spiritual connection to be essential to being Jewish.

Figure 3.8. Importance of praying or spiritual connection, by engagement group



Question text: "How important is each of the following to what being Jewish means to you?"

Responses to several of these questions differ by region, lifestage, and financial status (Table 3.18). For example, Jewish adults in City Other are less likely than in other regions to feel that remembering the Holocaust is essential (67%), and Jewish adults in City Far North are most likely to believe that praying or spiritual connection is essential (49%).

Among those at different lifestages, Jewish Pre-K parents and Jewish singles ages 22-39 are less likely to consider remembering the Holocaust to be essential (64% of each). Jewish parents are more likely to consider prayer and spiritual connection to be essential, including 39% of Pre-K parents and 37% of K-12 parents.

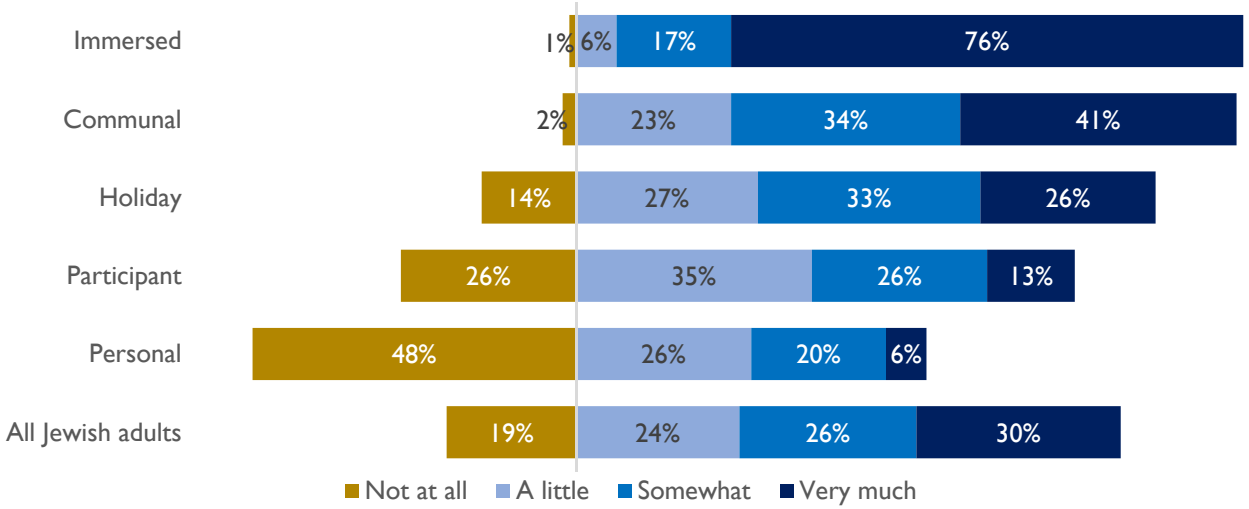
There is no relationship between respondents' financial situations and these questions about Jewish attitudes, with the exception of prayer and spiritual connection. Thirty-nine percent of those who are struggling financially consider praying and spiritual connection to be essential, compared to 29% overall.

Table 3.18. Importance of what being Jewish means, by group (% essential)

	Leading an ethical and moral life (%)	Remembering the Holocaust (%)	Working for justice and equality in society (%)	Working for racial justice (%)	Taking care of Jews in need around the world (%)	Praying or spiritual connection (%)
All Jewish adults	82	77	59	51	45	29
Region						
City Far North	89	70	53	50	54	49
City North	80	74	63	54	48	20
City Other	81	67	64	62	38	23
Near North Suburbs	82	76	60	54	47	32
North Suburbs Cook	83	83	58	52	52	23
North Suburbs Lake	87	82	64	52	55	29
Near NW Suburbs	78	89	54	45	50	27
Far NW Suburbs	77	83	56	53	39	21
West Suburbs	78	78	56	51	34	26
South Suburbs	--	--	--	--	--	--
Lifestage						
Parent Pre-K	75	64	51	43	52	39
Parent K-12	84	82	56	50	49	37
Couple 22-39	74	72	55	44	51	23
Couple 40-69	84	80	58	50	42	24
Couple 70+	82	76	58	50	40	20
Single 22-39	78	64	65	59	47	21
Single 40-69	83	79	61	53	44	30
Single 70+	83	79	65	59	38	23
Multigenerational	86	84	64	59	52	31
Financial situation						
Struggling	82	79	60	57	50	39
Enough	82	81	60	52	45	27
Extra	82	74	60	52	45	28
Well-off	85	76	63	54	48	21

The survey asked respondents about the extent to which being Jewish is part of daily life. Nineteen percent of Jewish adults feel being Jewish is not at all part of their daily life; for 30% it is very much part of daily life (Figure 3.9). Jewish engagement groups differ widely on this question. For almost half of the Personal group (48%), being Jewish is not at all part of daily life. In contrast, for three quarters of the Immersed group (76%), being Jewish is very much part of daily life.

Figure 3.9. Extent to which being Jewish is part of daily life, by engagement group



Question text: "To what extent do you feel that being Jewish is a part of your daily life?"

There are variations in this attitude across demographic groups (Table 3.19). For more than half of Jewish adults in City Far North (53%), being Jewish is very much part of daily life, and for 29% of Jewish adults in West Suburbs, being Jewish is not at all part of daily life.

Among those at different lifestages, Jewish parents are most likely to say that being Jewish is part of daily life, including 45% of Pre-K parents and 37% of K-12 parents. Among younger Jewish adults, the share is lowest; 23% of couples ages 22-39 and 25% of singles ages 22-39 say that being Jewish is part of daily life.

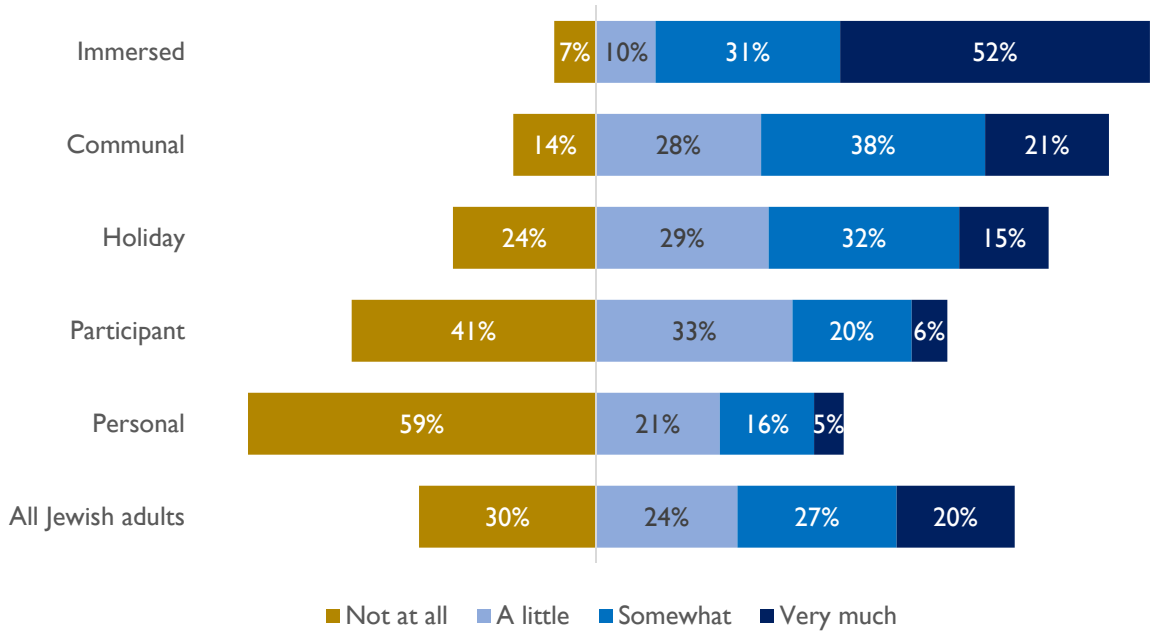
There are no significant differences in this question by financial status.

Table 3.19. Extent to which being Jewish is part of daily life

	Not at all (%)	A little (%)	Somewhat (%)	Very much (%)
All Jewish adults	19	24	26	30
Region				
City Far North	9	21	17	53
City North	22	25	22	31
City Other	20	25	25	30
Near North Suburbs	17	20	32	31
North Suburbs Cook	15	22	30	33
North Suburbs Lake	13	24	28	35
Near NW Suburbs	22	20	29	29
Far NW Suburbs	31	24	22	22
West Suburbs	29	25	30	16
South Suburbs	--	--	--	--
Lifestage				
Parent Pre-K	19	13	24	45
Parent K-12	19	24	20	37
Couple 22-39	21	34	21	23
Couple 40-69	17	27	27	29
Couple 70+	18	18	32	32
Single 22-39	22	26	27	25
Single 40-69	24	21	24	31
Single 70+	18	22	31	29
Multigenerational	18	21	28	32
Financial situation				
Struggling	14	24	25	37
Enough	22	20	27	31
Extra	21	24	24	31
Well-off	23	24	24	29

Another question related to the relevance of Judaism to respondents' lives asked whether being Jewish helps with coping during times of crisis (Figure 3.10). For 30% of Jewish adults, being Jewish does not help at all, and for 20% being Jewish helps very much. Jewish engagement groups differ widely on this question. For more than half of the Personal group (59%), being Jewish does not help at all with coping in times of crisis. In contrast, for over half of the Immersed group (52%) being Jewish helps very much.

Figure 3.10. Extent to which being Jewish helps with coping during times of crisis



Question text: "To what extent do you feel that being Jewish helps you to cope at a time of crisis?"

This attitude differs across demographic groups (Table 3.20). A larger share of Jewish adults in City Far North (40%) than other regions feel that being Jewish helps very much.

Among those at different lifestages, Jewish parents are most likely to say that being Jewish helps very much with coping in times of crisis, including 30% of Pre-K parents and 23% of K-12 parents. Almost half of couples ages 22-39 (45%) say that being Jewish does not help at all with coping in times of crisis. This share is larger than among Jewish older couples and Jewish singles.

There are no significant differences in this question by financial status.

Figure 3.20. Extent to which being Jewish helps with coping during times of crisis

	Not at all (%)	A little (%)	Somewhat (%)	Very much (%)
All Jewish adults	30	24	27	20
Region				
City Far North	21	14	26	40
City North	36	26	25	13
City Other	30	28	23	18
Near North Suburbs	26	26	30	18
North Suburbs Cook	26	24	33	18
North Suburbs Lake	25	22	32	20
Near NW Suburbs	30	19	31	19
Far NW Suburbs	41	26	17	16
West Suburbs	35	25	28	12
South Suburbs	--	--	--	--
Lifestage				
Parent Pre-K	27	24	19	30
Parent K-12	25	25	27	23
Couple 22-39	45	25	17	13
Couple 40-69	30	26	28	17
Couple 70+	33	22	28	18
Single 22-39	31	26	27	15
Single 40-69	32	26	26	17
Single 70+	23	24	36	18
Multigenerational	27	19	32	23
Financial situation				
Struggling	26	21	27	25
Enough	31	23	27	19
Extra	32	24	24	20
Well-off	31	26	27	16

Demographics of Jewish denominations

Demographic groups differ in terms of distribution of Jewish denominations (Table 3.21). City Far North has the greatest concentration of Orthodox Jewish adults. While 4% of Jewish adults in Metropolitan Chicago are Modern Orthodox and 3% are Other Orthodox, in City Far North the proportions are 13% Modern Orthodox and 26% Other Orthodox. North Suburbs Lake has the largest concentration of Reform Jews (45%) and the smallest concentration of Jewish adults with no denomination (26%). In West Suburbs, half of Jewish adults (50%) do not have a specific denomination.

Among those at different lifestages, Jewish Pre-K parents include the largest share of Orthodox Jews; 10% are Modern Orthodox and 14% are Other Orthodox. Among couples ages 22-39, more than half (56%) have no Jewish denomination, as do 48% of single adults ages 22-39 and 47% of single adults ages 40-69 .

Among the different financial status categories, Orthodox Jews are disproportionately represented in the struggling category (7% Modern Orthodox and 9% Other Orthodox). Among well-off households, 38% are Reform Jews.

Table 3.21. Denomination of Jewish adults in Metropolitan Chicago

	Modern Orth. (%)	Other Orth. (%)	Conservative (%)	Reform (%)	Other denom. (%)	No Denom. (%)	Total (%)
All Jewish adults	4	3	16	29	4	44	100
Region							
City Far North	13	26	7	17	6	30	100
City North	3	0	17	30	4	45	100
City Other	3	0	22	26	7	42	100
Near North Suburbs	7	4	14	27	6	41	100
North Suburbs Cook	2	1	22	35	3	37	100
North Suburbs Lake	1	< 1	21	45	6	26	100
Near NW Suburbs	1	< 1	14	36	6	42	100
Far NW Suburbs	< 1	1	22	32	2	43	100
West Suburbs	2	1	15	29	2	50	100
South Suburbs	--	--	--	--	--	--	100
Lifestage							
Parent Pre-K	10	14	16	21	8	32	100
Parent K-12	8	8	17	25	6	37	100
Couple 22-39	1	0	12	26	5	56	100
Couple 40-69	2	1	15	38	4	40	100
Couple 70+	2	2	21	33	4	37	100
Single 22-39	3	0	16	25	8	48	100
Single 40-69	1	0	22	26	4	47	100
Single 70+	1	0	24	34	5	36	100
Multigenerational	4	5	15	36	5	34	100
Financial situation							
Struggling	7	9	20	23	5	36	100
Enough	3	2	17	29	6	43	100
Extra	3	3	16	33	5	40	100
Well-off	2	1	16	38	5	39	100

The denomination that a person chooses to identify with may or may not correspond to the denomination in which the person was raised (Table 3.22). Among Jewish adults who are currently Modern Orthodox, 58% were raised as Orthodox, 28% Conservative, and 4% Reform. Conservative Jews in Metropolitan Chicago are less likely to switch denominations than Orthodox and Reform Jews. Among those who are currently Conservative, 71% were raised Conservative. Fifty-six percent

of those who currently claim no denomination were raised that way, but the other 44% were raised in a denomination (4% Orthodox, 18% Conservative, 21% Reform, and 2% other).

Table 3.22. Current denomination by childhood denomination

	Childhood denomination					
Current Denomination	Orthodox (%)	Conservative (%)	Reform (%)	Other denom. (%)	No denom. (%)	Total (%)
All Jewish adults	9	31	29	3	28	100
Modern Orthodox	**58**	28	4	2	8	100
Other Orthodox	**62**	20	8	< 1	9	100
Conservative	10	**71**	7	4	8	100
Reform	2	28	**61**	1	8	100
Other denomination	2	29	24	**19**	26	100
No denomination	4	18	21	2	**56**	100

Jewish heritage

Among Jewish adults in Metropolitan Chicago, 86% identify their Jewish heritage as Ashkenazi (Table 3.23). Four percent identify their Jewish heritage as Sephardi, and 1% identify as Mizrahi. Nine percent did not indicate a heritage.

Table 3.23. Jewish heritage

	Metropolitan Chicago Jewish adults (%)	US Jewish adults (%)*
Ashkenazi	86	66
Sephardi	4	3
Mizrahi	1	1
Other	2	8
None, no particular heritage	9	17

*Totals add to more than 100 because multiple responses could be provided.

Marriage, inmarriage and intermarriage

In Metropolitan Chicago, just over one quarter (27%) of all Jewish adults are single (not married or partnered).[36] About half (49%) are inmarried, and another quarter (24%) are intermarried. The individual intermarriage rate, representing the percentage of Jewish adults with a partner who is not Jewish, is 33% (Table 3.24). (See definitions of inmarriage and intermarriage in chapter 1, figure 1.6.)

The largest concentration of single Jewish adults is found in City North (40%) and the lowest concentration in North Suburbs Cook (20%), North Suburbs Lake (21%), and the Far NW Suburbs (20%). Inmarried Jews are most concentrated in North Suburbs Cook (59%), North Suburbs Lake (64%), and the Near NW Suburbs (58%).

[36] Throughout this report, unless otherwise specified, "couples" and "marriages" include married and cohabiting couples, and "spouse" refers both to marital spouses and partners.

The regions with the highest individual intermarriage rates are City Other (57%), the Far NW Suburbs (43%) and the West Suburbs (64%). Intermarriage rates are lowest in City Far North (21%), North Suburbs Lake (20%), and the Near NW Suburbs (22%). Intermarriage rates are highest among couples ages 22-39 (50%) and lowest among Couples ages 70+ (17%).

Among Jewish households who are financial struggling, 41% include single Jewish adults; in contrast, 22% of well-off households include single Jewish adults.

Table 3.24. Marital status of Jewish adults (individual rate)

	Single (%)	Inmarried (%)	Intermarried (%)	Total (%)	Individual intermarriage rate (%)
All Jewish adults	27	49	24	100	33
Region					
City Far North	31	55	15	100	21
City North	40	38	22	100	37
City Other	34	29	38	100	57
Near North Suburbs	30	52	18	100	26
North Suburbs Cook	20	59	21	100	26
North Suburbs Lake	21	64	16	100	20
Near NW Suburbs	26	58	16	100	22
Far NW Suburbs	20	46	35	100	43
West Suburbs	33	24	43	100	64
South Suburbs	--	--	--	100	--
Lifestage					
Parent Pre-K	8	59	33	100	36
Parent K-12	10	58	33	100	36
Couple 22-39	n/a	50	50	100	50
Couple 40-69	n/a	69	31	100	31
Couple 70+	n/a	83	17	100	17
Single 22-39	100	n/a	n/a	100	n/a
Single 40-69	100	n/a	n/a	100	n/a
Single 70+	100	n/a	n/a	100	n/a
Multigenerational	31	45	24	100	35
Financial situation					
Struggling	41	42	17	100	29
Enough	31	43	26	100	38
Extra	24	48	29	100	38
Well-off	22	53	26	100	33

CHAPTER 4.
JEWISH CHILDREN AND JEWISH EDUCATION

This chapter describes characteristics of Jewish children and their households as well as their participation in formal and informal Jewish education. In this chapter, "children" usually refers to minor children, ages 17 or younger. For the section that describes participation in Jewish education only, this definition is expanded to include 18- and 19-year-olds who are still in high school.

Key findings

- Among the 73,500 children who live in Metropolitan Chicago Jewish households, 54,900 children, or 75% of the total, are considered by their parents to be Jewish only (63%) or Jewish and another religion (12%). Among the remaining children, 3,900 have a religion other than Judaism, and 14,700 do not have a religion.
- Of the 54,900 Jewish children, 55% are being raised by inmarried parents, 36% by intermarried parents, and the remaining 9% by single parents.
- Nearly all inmarried parents consider their children to be exclusively Jewish. Among children of intermarried parents, more than half are considered by their parents Jewish in some way: 34% exclusively Jewish and 21% as Jewish and another religion.
- About two thirds of Jewish children (68%) had a Jewish ritual at the time of birth or adoption, including a Jewish naming ceremony led by clergy, a ceremony not led by clergy, and/or a Jewish ritual circumcision.
- Sixty-four percent of age-eligible Jewish children have had a bar or bat mitzvah ceremony and another 8% will have one in the future
- Twenty percent of Jewish children birth to age five and 31% of Jewish children ages three to five attended a Jewish-run early childhood program.
- Inmarried parents are much more likely to send their children to Jewish preschool programs (33%) than are intermarried parents (8%). Intermarried parents are more likely to send their children to non-Jewish or home-based programs (39%) than are inmarried parents (28%).
- Thirty-eight percent of Jewish children in grades K-12 were enrolled in some form of formal or informal Jewish school during the 2020-21 academic year. Sixteen percent of K-12 Jewish children attended a part-time school, and 18% attended a day school or yeshiva. Among those children not enrolled in a formal school, 6% participated in Jewish tutoring or private classes, and 4% took classes at their synagogue.
- Twenty-three percent of Jewish children high school age or younger were enrolled in Jewish education sometime in the past but not in 2020-21.
- Thirty-nine percent of Jewish children have never participated in any Jewish schooling.
- In 2020, 13% of Jewish children in K-12 attended a Jewish summer program, compared to 24% who attended in 2019 but not in 2020. Another 25% of children attended in 2018 or earlier, but not in 2019 or 2020. Participation decreased similarly for Jewish children who attended non-

Jewish summer programs. Note that many summer programs were suspended in the summer of 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Jewish children

Among the 73,500 children who live in Metropolitan Chicago Jewish households, 54,900 children, or 75% of the total, are considered by their parents to be Jewish only or Jewish and another religion (Table 4.1). Among the remaining children, 3,900 have a religion other than Judaism, and 14,700 do not have a religion.

Table 4.1. Counts and proportion of children in Jewish households

	Estimate	Percentage
Jewish	54,900	75%
Jewish only	46,300	63%
Jewish and another religion	8,700	12%
Not Jewish	18,600	25%
Another religion	3,900	5%
No religion	14,700	20%
All children	73,500	100%

Note: For purposes of this study, the religion of children is based on whether their parents consider them to be Jewish, Jewish and something else, something else, or none of these. All of the "something else" categories that were provided were other religions.

Among Jewish children, 18,300 (33%) are birth to age 5, 18,700 (34%) are ages 6 to 12, and 17,000 (31%) are ages 13 to 17 (Table 4.2 and 4.3).

Table 4.2. Number of children in Jewish households by age

	Jewish children	Children who are not Jewish	All children in Jewish households
Birth-age 5	18,300	4,500	22,700
Ages 6-12	18,700	7,800	26,500
Ages 13-17	17,000	5,800	22,700
Age unspecified	900	600	1,500
Total	54,900	18,600	73,500

Table 4.3. Ages of children in Jewish households

	Jewish children (%)	Children who are not Jewish (%)	All children in Jewish households (%)
Birth-age 5	33	24	31
Ages 6-12	34	42	36
Ages 13-17	31	31	31
Age unspecified	2	3	2
Total	100	100	100

Religion of children by household characteristics

Overall, 75% of children in Jewish households are considered Jewish in some way: 63% are Jewish only, and 12% are Jewish and another religion (Table 4.4).

Fewer parents in the Personal and Participant engagement groups consider their children Jewish, compared to the other three engagement groups. In the Personal group, 24% of children are considered Jewish only, as are 36% of children in the Participant group. In the Immersed group, 92% of children are considered Jewish only. The West Suburbs includes the smallest share of children (33%) who are Jewish only and the largest share (26%) who are Jewish and another religion.

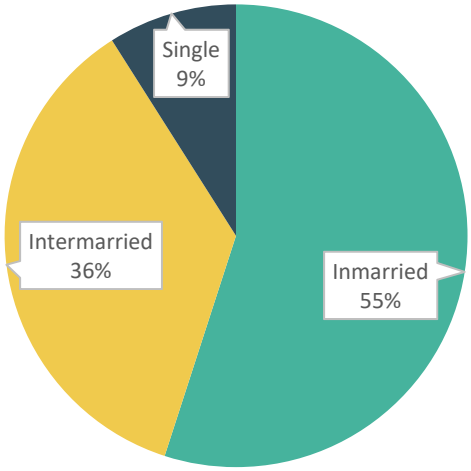
Table 4.4. Children in Jewish households by household type

	Jewish only (%)	Jewish and another religion (%)	Another religion (%)	No religion (%)	Total (%)
All Jewish children	63	12	5	20	100
Region					
City Far North	72	5	< 1	23	100
City North	65	5	13	17	100
City Other	44	20	1	36	100
Near North Suburbs	80	5	3	12	100
North Suburbs Cook	78	14	6	2	100
North Suburbs Lake	80	6	6	8	100
Near NW Suburbs	62	15	1	21	100
Far NW Suburbs	51	8	2	38	100
West Suburbs	33	26	7	34	100
South Suburbs	--	--	--	--	100
Jewish engagement					
Personal	24	19	10	47	100
Participant	36	27	10	27	100
Holiday	76	15	2	8	100
Communal	77	11	1	12	100
Immersed	92	0	0	7	100
Financial situation					
Struggling	59	16	5	20	100
Enough	60	13	8	20	100
Extra	55	18	1	26	100
Well-off	62	10	1	27	100

Parents of Jewish children

Of the 54,900 Jewish children, 55% are being raised by inmarried parents, 36% by intermarried parents, and the remaining 9% by single parents (Figure 4.1).

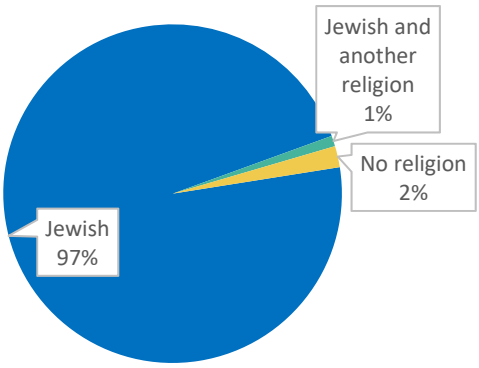
Figure 4.1. Parent marriage status of Jewish children



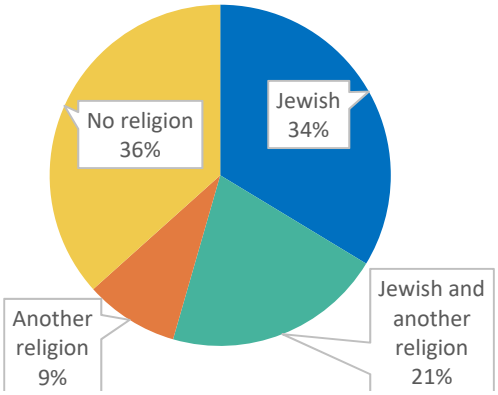
Nearly all inmarried parents consider their children to be exclusively Jewish (Figure 4.2), with just 2% being raised without religion. Among children of intermarried parents, more than half are considered Jewish in some way: 34% exclusively Jewish and 21% as Jewish and another religion. Another 36% of children of intermarried parents have no religion. Among children of Jewish single parents, 56% are considered exclusively Jewish, 12% as Jewish and another religion, and 28% with no religion.

Figure 4.2. Religion of children by parent marriage type

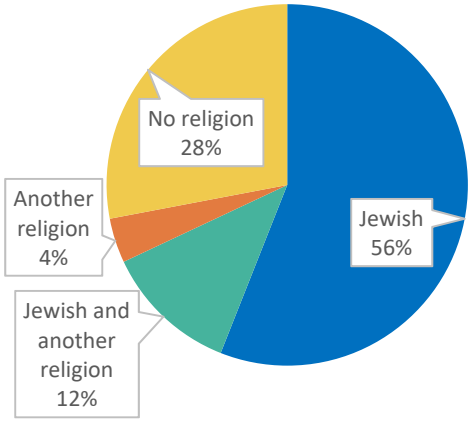
Inmarried parents



Intermarried parents



Single parents



Participation in Jewish education

Jewish education occurs in formal and informal contexts. **Formal Jewish education** includes preschool, part-time school, day school, and private classes delivered by a Jewish provider. **Informal Jewish education** includes camps, youth groups, and Israel trips.

Because nearly all children in Jewish education are considered Jewish by their parents, the analysis in this section is restricted to Jewish children.[37] Unless otherwise specified, this includes both Jewish-only children and children who are Jewish and another religion.

Early childhood education (ECE)

In Metropolitan Chicago, 20% of Jewish children birth to age five and 31% of Jewish children ages three to five attended a Jewish-run early childhood education program (ECE) (Table 4.5). These numbers include Jewish-only children and children who are Jewish and another religion.

In 2010, 40% of Jewish-only children birth to age four were enrolled in a Jewish preschool program. Using comparable numbers for 2020, 24% of Jewish-only children birth to age four were enrolled in a Jewish preschool program. Some of the decline in enrollment may be attributed to the pandemic.

Table 4.5. Jewish children in ECE, 2020

	Jewish children birth-5 (%)	Jewish children 3-5 (%)
Jewish-run program	20	31
Non-Jewish-run program	31	40
Home-based program	9	8

Overall, 22% of Jewish households with preschool-aged Jewish children had at least one child enrolled in a Jewish-run program, and 37% had a child in a non-Jewish or home-based program. Inmarried parents are much more likely to send their children to Jewish preschool programs (33%) than are intermarried parents (8%). Intermarried parents are more likely to send their children to non-Jewish or home-based programs (39%), compared to inmarried parents (28%) (not shown in table). Among non-Jewish children, 2% attended Jewish ECE (not shown in table).

Parents cited a variety of reasons for enrolling their children in a Jewish early childhood program (Table 4.6). Responses were analyzed separately for Jewish households with children in non-Jewish programs (column 2) and Jewish programs (column 3); responses were combined in column 1.

Overall, the most common reasons given were the convenient location (75%) and the program's warm and loving environment (70%). For Jewish programs, the warm and loving environment (82%) was more important than the location (63%), but for non-Jewish programs the location (79%) was more important than the environment (65%).

Among preschool-age children who were not currently enrolled in a Jewish-run preschool, 13% were formerly enrolled in one (not shown in table).

[37] A small number of children who are not considered Jewish (1%) were enrolled in formal or informal Jewish education in 2020-21.

Table 4.6. Primary reasons for selecting early childhood programs for Jewish children

	Households in any early childhood program (%)	Household in non-Jewish childhood programs (%)	Household in Jewish early childhood programs (%)
Warm and loving environment	70	65	82
Feeling of community	50	41	75
Teacher and staff quality	60	55	72
Educational quality and philosophy	62	59	71
Convenient location	75	79	63
Attentiveness to health and safety	53	54	50
Schedule	53	57	42
Program offerings	25	20	39
Cost	31	35	19
Financial aid	20	23	12
Quality of distance learning	5	5	5
Other	8	8	8
Jewish programs only			
Jewish values	n/a	n/a	80
Jewish content	n/a	n/a	77

Jewish early childhood education can serve as a pipeline to K-12 Jewish education. Among Jewish children in grades K-12 during the 2020-21 school year, 43% attended a Jewish-run preschool in the past (not shown in table). Among K-12 children who ever attended any Jewish full-time day school or yeshiva, 90% attended a Jewish early childhood program (Table 4.7). Of students who ever attended a part-time Jewish school, 52% had attended Jewish preschool. Of those who never had any formal Jewish education, 12% attended Jewish preschool.

Table 4.7. Students in K-12 Jewish education who formerly attended Jewish early childhood program

Jewish K-12 children who were…	Attended Jewish preschool (%)
Ever in Jewish full-time school	90
Ever in Jewish part-time school	52
Never in formal Jewish education	12

Among Jewish children currently in K-12 who attended Jewish preschool in the past, 53% later attended a full-time day school or yeshiva, 35% attended a Jewish part-time school, and 12% never attended formal Jewish school (Table 4.8). In contrast, among Jewish students who never attended Jewish preschool, 4% later attended a full-time day school, 34% attended a Jewish part-time school, and 63% never attended formal Jewish school.

Table 4.8. Jewish preschool retention for K-12 Jewish education

Jewish K-12 children who …	Ever attended full-time school	Ever attended part-time school, not full-time school	Never attended formal Jewish school	Total
Attended Jewish preschool	53	35	12	100
Never attended Jewish preschool	4	34	63	100

K-12 Jewish education

Jewish education occurs in the context of formal classroom settings, such as day schools and congregational schools, as well as informal settings like camps and youth groups. Participation in Jewish education may have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. This section, therefore, includes past participation in Jewish schools in addition to current enrollment.

Table 4.9 shows the proportions of age-eligible Jewish children in each form of Jewish education during the 2020-21 academic year. Thirty-eight percent of Jewish children in grades K-12 were enrolled in some form of formal or informal Jewish school during the 2020-21 academic year. Sixteen percent of K-12 Jewish children attended a congregational school, and 18% attended a day school or yeshiva. Among those Jewish children not enrolled in a formal school, 6% participated in Jewish tutoring or private classes, and 4% took classes at their synagogue.

Another 23% of Jewish children were enrolled in Jewish education sometime in the past, but not in 2020-21. The remainder of Jewish children, 39%, never participated in any Jewish schooling.

In 2010, among Jewish-only children ages 5 to 17, 24% were enrolled in fulltime Jewish day school and 36% were enrolled in congregational schools (not shown in table). Using comparable numbers for 2020, 21% of Jewish-only children ages 5 to 17 were enrolled in fulltime Jewish day school, and 19% of were enrolled in congregational schools. Some of the decline in enrollment since 2010 may be attributed to the pandemic.

Table 4.9. Jewish education in 2020-21 and prior to 2020-21, Jewish children K-12

	Jewish children in K-12, during 2020-21 (%)	Jewish children in K-12, not in 2020-21 but before (%)	Jewish children in K-12, never in this form of Jewish schooling (%)	Total (%)
Any Jewish education	38	23	39	100
Any formal education	32	27	41	100
Part-time congregational school	16	25	59	100
Full-time day school or yeshiva	18	6	76	100
Other education				
Private classes or tutoring in Hebrew or Jewish subjects	6	15	79	100
Classes at a synagogue aside from a part-time school	4	11	85	100
Online-only Jewish education program offered by an organization aside from your synagogue or school	4	2	96	100
Hebrew language instruction in a public school	3	2	95	100

Participation in formal Jewish education differs by household characteristics (Table 4.10). Enrollment in full-time day school and part-time Jewish school was highest among families in City Far North, where 48% of Jewish households had at least one child in full-time school in 2020-21, and 27% had at least one child in part-time school. Jewish households in the Immersed group were more likely to send their children to full-time day school (37%) or part-time Jewish school (27%) than other engagement groups.

Jewish households that were financially struggling were more likely to enroll a child in a full-time day school (24%) and least likely to enroll in a part-time Jewish school (14%), compared to Jewish households with more financial means.

Inmarried parents were more likely to enroll their children in full-time day school (24%) and part-time Jewish school (24%) compared to intermarried and single parents.

Table 4.10. Characteristics of households with Jewish children in K-12 Jewish school in 2020-21

	Any Jewish schooling (%)	Full-time school (%)	Part-time school (%)	Other schooling (%)
Households with Jewish children in K-12	39	14	19	17
Region				
City Far North	67	48	27	16
City North	42	17	21	14
City Other	--	--	--	--
Near North Suburbs	47	22	20	21
North Suburbs Cook	35	6	21	20
North Suburbs Lake	39	7	22	17
Near NW Suburbs	--	--	--	--
Far NW Suburbs	--	--	--	--
West Suburbs	--	--	--	--
South Suburbs	--	--	--	--
Jewish engagement				
Personal	--	--	--	--
Participant	--	--	--	--
Holiday	30	6	15	16
Communal	43	8	31	19
Immersed	70	37	27	29
Financial situation				
Struggling	38	24	14	14
Enough	31	9	15	13
Extra	43	12	27	19
Well-off	44	10	29	17
Marital status				
Inmarried	52	24	24	21
Intermarried	22	2	15	12
Not married	31	11	16	12

Many summer programs were suspended in the summer of 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. For that reason, the survey asked about participation in summer programs during three time periods: in 2020, in 2019 but not in 2020, and prior to 2019.

Tables 4.11 and 4.12 show participation in informal Jewish education during the summers of 2019 and 2020 and the 2020-21 academic year. Informal Jewish education includes summer programs, youth groups, and Israel trips. In 2020, 13% of Jewish children in K-12 attended a Jewish summer program, compared to 24% who attended in 2019 but not in 2020 (Table 4.12). Another 25% of children attended in 2018 or earlier, but not in 2019 or 2020. Participation decreased similarly for Jewish children who attended non-Jewish summer programs.

Table 4.11. Summer programs in 2020 and earlier, Jewish children in K-12

	Jewish children in K-12, 2020 (%)	Jewish children in K-12, 2019 not 2020 (%)	Jewish children in K-12, 2018 or before (%)
Any Jewish summer program	13	24	25
Jewish day camp	9	14	20
Jewish overnight camp	3	12	10
Jewish online program	2	1	1
Non-Jewish day camp	9	15	22
Non-Jewish overnight camp	1	7	6

Jewish households in City Far North were most likely to send their children to Jewish day camp (35%) or Jewish overnight camp (32%), compared with other regions. In contrast, Jewish households in North Suburbs Lake were most likely to send their children to non-Jewish day camp (43%) or non-Jewish overnight camp (22%).

More inmarried couples sent children to a Jewish day camp (31%) and Jewish overnight camp (26%) than intermarried couples or single parents (Table 4.12).

There were no significant differences in camp participation based on financial status.

Table 4.12. Characteristics of households with Jewish K-12 children in summer programs in 2020 or 2019

	Jewish day camp (%)	Jewish overnight camp (%)	Non-Jewish day camp (%)	Non-Jewish overnight camp (%)
Households with Jewish children in K-12	24	19	30	11
Region				
City Far North	35	32	16	7
City North	29	20	37	16
City Other	--	--	--	--
Near North Suburbs	22	13	31	13
North Suburbs Cook	24	26	31	16
North Suburbs Lake	18	22	43	22
Near NW Suburbs	--	--	--	--
Far NW Suburbs	--	--	--	--
West Suburbs	--	--	--	--
South Suburbs	--	--	--	--
Jewish engagement				
Personal	--	--	--	--
Participant	--	--	--	--
Holiday	22	11	23	7
Communal	23	21	37	18
Immersed	39	36	19	10
Financial situation				
Struggling	23	15	24	9
Enough	17	16	30	11
Extra	19	23	30	9
Well-off	26	23	34	22
Marital status				
Inmarried	31	26	26	10
Intermarried	16	12	32	13
Not married	7	12	27	16

Among Jewish children ages 13 and over, 12% participated in a Jewish youth group in 2020-21, and 13% of Jewish children participated before 2020-21 but not in 2020-21 (not shown in table). Six percent of Jewish children ages 12 and over participated in the 8th grade Ta'am Yisrael[38] teen trip to Israel, and 7% participated in a different teen Israel trip.

[38]Now called IsraelNow.

Children and family programs

In addition to formal and informal Jewish education, family programs outside of school or preschool included Tot Shabbat, synagogue-based playgroups, and family holiday programs. Twenty-five percent of Jewish households with a child age 12 or younger attended at least one of these programs in the past six months (Table 4.13). Fourteen percent of Jewish households participated in online-only events, 5% attended in-person events, and 6% attended both types of events (not shown in table).

The suburbs had the highest participation in these programs, including 37% of age-eligible Jewish households in Near North Suburbs, 34% in North Suburbs Cook, and 37% in North Suburbs Lake. Participation was highest among Jewish households in the Communal group, with 56% attending one of these programs, compared to other engagement groups. Participation in family programs was also higher among Jewish households that were well-off (36%) and among inmarried families (41%).

Table 4.13. Households that participated in Jewish-sponsored children and family programs in past six months

	Participated in family programs (%)
Households with Jewish child <12	25
Region	
City Far North	23
City North	28
City Other	19
Near North Suburbs	37
North Suburbs Cook	34
North Suburbs Lake	37
Near NW Suburbs	--
Far NW Suburbs	--
West Suburbs	--
South Suburbs	--
Jewish engagement	
Personal	3
Participant	13
Holiday	19
Communal	56
Immersed	45
Financial situation	
Struggling	17
Enough	21
Extra	25
Well-off	36
Marital status	
Inmarried	41
Intermarried	16
Not married	--
Synagogue member	
Yes	50
No	13

PJ Library and PJ Our Way programs send Jewish books to households with at least one child age 12 or younger. Among eligible Jewish households, 38% received books (Table 4.14). PJ Library reaches a smaller share of households in City Other (24%) than other regions. Participation is highest among Jewish households in the Communal group, with 61% receiving books, compared to other engagement groups. Participation is also higher among families who are well-off (46%) and among inmarried families (60%).

Table 4.14. Households that receive PJ Library books

	Receive PJ Library books (%)
Households with Jewish child <13	38
Region	
City Far North	48
City North	49
City Other	24
Near North Suburbs	51
North Suburbs Cook	44
North Suburbs Lake	51
Near NW Suburbs	--
Far NW Suburbs	--
West Suburbs	--
South Suburbs	--
Jewish engagement	
Personal	12
Participant	35
Holiday	39
Communal	61
Immersed	57
Financial situation	
Struggling	31
Enough	39
Extra	31
Well-off	46
Marital status	
Inmarried	60
Intermarried	23
Not married	--

Lifecycle rituals

Lifecycle events for Jewish children include birth and bar/bat mitzvah. About two thirds of Jewish children (68%) had a Jewish ritual at the time of birth or adoption, including a Jewish naming ceremony led by clergy, a ceremony not led by clergy, and/or a Jewish ritual circumcision (Table 4.15). Just over half (57%) of male Jewish children had a Jewish ritual circumcision, and another 34% of male Jewish children had a medical circumcision.

Table 4.15. Jewish birth and adoption rituals

	All Jewish children (%)
Any Jewish ritual (naming ceremony or ritual circumcision)	68
Jewish ritual circumcision (asked of male children)	57
Jewish naming ceremony led by a Jewish clergy	46
Jewish naming ceremony not led by Jewish clergy	6
Medical circumcision (asked of male children)	34
No ritual	20

Note: Numbers exceed 100% because children may have had more than one ritual.

Sixty-four percent of age-eligible Jewish children have had a bar or bat mitzvah ceremony, and another 8% will have one in the future (not shown in table). Of those who already had a bar or bat mitzvah ceremony, 67% participated in a service led by the rabbi of their congregation, and 10% hired a rabbi for the occasion (Table 4.16).

Table 4.16. Bar and bat mitzvah rituals

	Children who had bar or bat mitzvah ceremony (%)
Service led by rabbi of a congregation	67
Service that was organized by a synagogue or congregation	42
Service led by family or friends	13
Service not connected to a synagogue	11
Service led by rabbi hired for the occasion	10
Did not hold a service	6

Adult Jewish education

Jewish education extends to adults as well. Of all Jewish adults, 23% attended at least one Jewish program that was primarily educational in the past year (Table 4.17). Jewish adults in City Far North were most likely to attend a Jewish educational program (42%) and those in Far NW suburbs were least likely to attend (13%). Almost no Jewish adults in the Personal or Holiday groups attended Jewish educational programs.

There were no significant differences in participation by lifestage or financial status.

Table 4.17. Attended Jewish programs or activities that were primarily educational, past year

	Attended educational program (%)
All Jewish adults	23
Region	
City Far North	42
City North	26
City Other	23
Near North Suburbs	27
North Suburbs Cook	24
North Suburbs Lake	29
Near NW Suburbs	20
Far NW Suburbs	13
West Suburbs	20
South Suburbs	--
Jewish engagement	
Personal	< 1
Participant	23
Holiday	2
Communal	42
Immersed	62
Lifestage	
Parent PreK	25
Parent K-12	30
Couple 22-39	23
Couple 40-69	25
Couple 70+	28
Single 22-39	20
Single 40-69	20
Single 70+	25
Multigenerational	28
Financial situation	
Struggling	22
Enough	25
Extra	26
Well-off	29

Thirty-nine percent of Jewish adults in the Chicago area engaged in some form of Jewish text study within the past year, and 10% engaged in text study frequently (Table 4.18). Jewish adults in City Far North were most likely to study texts (63%), compared to all other regions.

Jewish parents and Jewish young singles were most likely to study texts, including 46% of Pre-K parents, 46% of K-12 parents, and 48% of singles ages 22-39.

Table 4.18. Studied or learned Jewish texts individually or with organization, past year

	Ever (%)	Frequently (%)
All Jewish adults	39	10
Region		
City Far North	63	37
City North	39	6
City Other	39	8
Near North Suburbs	41	13
North Suburbs Cook	36	8
North Suburbs Lake	42	10
Near NW Suburbs	34	5
Far NW Suburbs	40	5
West Suburbs	37	5
South Suburbs	--	--
Jewish engagement		
Personal	12	1
Participant	22	1
Holiday	35	4
Communal	52	8
Immersed	87	43
Lifestage		
Parent PreK	46	16
Parent K-12	46	17
Couple 22-39	35	5
Couple 40-69	39	8
Couple 70+	35	10
Single 22-39	48	11
Single 40-69	37	8
Single 70+	37	10
Multigenerational	47	13
Financial situation		
Struggling	49	18
Enough	41	9
Extra	39	11
Well-off	38	9

CHAPTER 5.
SYNAGOGUES AND JEWISH RITUAL

Membership in a synagogue and participation in Jewish rituals, whether at synagogue or at home, are fundamental ways that Jews and Jewish households express their connection to Judaism and engage with a Jewish community.

Key findings

- Approximately one-in-four Jewish households (26%) belong to a synagogue or another Jewish worship community in Metropolitan Chicago or elsewhere.
- Just over one third of Jewish adults (35%) reside in a synagogue-member household. This is the same share as among all US Jews.
- Denominational affiliation is distinct from synagogue membership, and individuals who identify with a particular denomination do not necessarily belong to congregations that align with that denomination. For example, 73% of Orthodox Jewish adults are members of Orthodox synagogues, 27% of Conservative Jewish adults are members of Conservative synagogues, and 34% of Reform Jewish adults are members of Reform synagogues.
- Just over half of Jewish adults (54%) attended some type of service at least once in the last six months, and 18% attended services monthly or more. Close to half of Jewish adults (46%) attended a High Holiday service in 2020.
- During the COVID-19 pandemic, nearly all Jewish adults in synagogue-member households (90%) attended religious services at least once, whether in-person or online, and 85% attended High Holiday services. Among Jewish adults not part of synagogue-member households, one-in-three (37%) attended religious services at least once, and more than one-in-four Jewish adults (28%) attended High Holiday services.
- In the six months prior to the study, just over one third of Jewish households in Metropolitan Chicago (35%) lit Shabbat candles at least once, and 10% lit candles almost always or always. About one third of Jewish households (32%) participated in a Shabbat meal at least once, and 8% participated in a Shabbat meal almost always or always.
- In spring 2020, three-in-five Jewish adults (60%) participated in a Passover seder, either in person or online.
- More than four-in-five Jewish adults (82%) lit Hanukkah candles in a typical year.
- Just over two-in-five Jewish adults (42%) fasted on Yom Kippur in 2020 for at least part of the day.
- Thirteen percent of Jewish households keep kosher at home.
- Fourteen percent of Jewish adults increased their engagement in Jewish religious life during the pandemic, and about one quarter (26%) decreased their participation in Jewish religious life.

Types of synagogues and worship communities

Metropolitan Chicago has well over 100 synagogues and *minyanim* of all denominations; most of these are "brick-and-mortar" synagogues. In this chapter, we define "brick-and-mortar" synagogues as those with a traditional membership structure, building, and clergy. Some synagogues do not require dues, some do not have a building, and others can best be described as independent minyanim.

While reviewing the findings in this chapter, it is important to bear in mind that the study was conducted in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. Synagogue participation and home-based ritual life were disrupted, as were many other aspects of daily life. To attempt to provide the most useful data possible, survey questions were adjusted to account for the impact of the pandemic. For example, all questions about participation in Jewish life included in-person and online activities. As some Passover seders shifted to "Zoom seders," participation might have been lower, higher, or about the same as in typical years. Due to the unprecedented circumstances and impact on synagogue life, comparisons to previous community studies are limited.

For purposes of this report, unless otherwise specified, synagogue-member households are Jewish households in which anyone belongs to synagogue, temple, *minyan*, *havurah*, or High Holiday congregation, whether or not that individual pays dues. For purposes of this report, Jewish adults are considered to be synagogue members if they live in a Jewish household in which anyone is a synagogue member.

Synagogue membership

In Metropolitan Chicago, approximately one-in-four Jewish households (26%) include someone who belongs to a synagogue or another Jewish worship community in Metropolitan Chicago or elsewhere (Table 5.1). The percentage is slightly lower (24%) for membership in local congregations. This membership share represents a decline from 2010, when 36% of households belonged to a congregation. Among all member households of local congregations, 21% do not pay dues but still consider themselves members.

Rather than only counting Jewish households as synagogue members, we measure synagogue involvement as the proportion of Jewish adults who live in households in which someone is a member. In Metropolitan Chicago, just over one third of Jewish adults (35%) reside in a synagogue-member household. Nationally, the rate is the same, with 35% of all US Jews living in synagogue-member households.[39]

Among Jewish households that belong to any type of Jewish congregation, 7% belong to a congregation outside of Metropolitan Chicago, 83% belong to one local congregation, and 9% belong to two or more congregations in Metropolitan Chicago.

Synagogue membership is highest at 43% in City Far North. Only about one-in-six Jewish households in the Far NW suburbs (16%) belong to a synagogue.

[39] Pew Research Center, 2021.

Synagogue membership is highest, but not universal, among Jewish households in the Immersed (72%) and Communal (62%) engagement groups. Less than 1% of Jewish households in the Personal engagement category are synagogue members.

There are differences in synagogue membership across Jewish households in different life stages. Membership rates are highest among couples ages 70 and older (36%) and parents of children in grades K-12 (36%). Jewish households with couples under age 40 and singles under age 70 have the lowest membership rates (20% and 21% respectively).

Table 5.1. Household congregation membership

	Congregation member (%)
All Jewish households	26
Region	
City Far North	43
City North	23
City Other	22
Near North Suburbs	30
North Suburbs Cook	38
North Suburbs Lake	35
Near NW Suburbs	27
Far NW Suburbs	16
West Suburbs	21
South Suburbs	--
Jewish engagement	
Personal	< 1
Participant	5
Holiday	25
Communal	62
Immersed	72
Lifestage	
Parent Pre-K	33
Parent K-12	36
Couple 22-39	20
Couple 40-69	25
Couple 70+	36
Single 22-39	21
Single 40-69	20
Single 70+	27
Multigenerational	30
Financial situation	
Struggling	26
Enough	26
Extra	28
Well-off	31

Among synagogue-member Jewish households, almost three-in-five (59%) belong to a brick-and-mortar synagogue, as defined above (Table 5.2). Of member households, 17% belong to a brick-and- mortar synagogue but do not pay dues, 8% belong to Chabad, and 7% belong to a *minyan*, *havurah*, or other independent worship community.

Among synagogue members, the brick-and-mortar dues-paying membership model is most prevalent in the West Suburbs (73%) and North Suburbs Lake (65%), and lowest in City Other (40%). However, in City Other, membership in independent *minyanim* and other congregations is highest at 24% and 31% respectively.

Table 5.2. Types of congregation membership, of synagogue-member households

	Brick-and-mortar, pays dues (%)	Brick-and-mortar, no dues (%)	Chabad (%)	Independent minyan (%)	Other types (%)	Outside Metro Chicago (%)
Synagogue-member households	59	17	8	7	7	7
Region						
City Far North	50	28	8	12	7	4
City North	57	24	4	9	7	7
City Other	40	20	6	24	31	3
Near North Suburbs	63	16	10	4	7	5
North Suburbs Cook	61	15	6	4	7	8
North Suburbs Lake	65	10	9	1	10	5
Near NW Suburbs	49	24	14	8	9	5
Far NW Suburbs	--	--	--	--	--	--
West Suburbs	73	10	4	6	5	1
South Suburbs	--	--	--	--	--	--
Jewish engagement						
Personal	--	--	--	--	--	--
Participant	--	--	--	--	--	--
Holiday	47	28	6	8	8	9
Communal	57	18	5	6	11	10
Immersed	59	16	12	11	11	2
Lifestage						
Parent Pre-K	55	23	11	6	4	3
Parent K-12	67	16	10	6	7	3
Couple 22-39	--	--	--	--	--	--
Couple 40-69	65	10	6	6	6	9
Couple 70+	60	9	9	4	7	11
Single 22-39	--	--	--	--	--	--
Single 40-69	54	20	4	11	11	2
Single 70+	64	18	5	8	2	5
Multigenerational	58	13	8	9	17	4
Financial situation						
Struggling	36	31	11	7	12	12
Enough	53	19	10	8	15	5
Extra	59	20	6	10	8	6
Well-off	70	11	5	8	7	6

Among the Jewish households that belong to brick-and-mortar synagogues, including dues-paying and non-dues-paying member households, almost half (49%) belong to Reform synagogues, 21% belong to Conservative synagogues, and 19% belong to Orthodox synagogues (Table 5.3). In City

Far North, 62% of synagogue-member households belong to an Orthodox synagogue, 18% belong to a Reform synagogue, and 8% belong to a Conservative synagogue. In North Suburbs Cook, North Suburbs Lake, Near NW Suburbs, and West Suburbs, the majority of synagogue-member households belong to Reform synagogues.

Among synagogue-member households with pre-school children, half (50%) belong to Orthodox synagogues. Among synagogue-member households that are struggling financially, one third (35%) belong to Reform synagogues, another third (34%) belong to Orthodox synagogues, and 18% belong to Conservative synagogues.

Table 5.3. Denomination of brick-and-mortar, dues-paying member households

	Reform (%)	Conservative (%)	Orthodox (%)	Reconstructionist (%)	Other or no denomination (%)
Brick-and-mortar member households	49	21	19	5	8
Region					
City Far North	18	8	62	7	8
City North	44	28	20	1	12
City Other	47	34	3	4	16
Near North Suburbs	42	14	32	11	4
North Suburbs Cook	67	26	3	3	3
North Suburbs Lake	66	28	2	2	6
Near NW Suburbs	57	21	4	9	9
Far NW Suburbs	--	--	--	--	--
West Suburbs	71	11	< 1	8	11
South Suburbs	--	--	--	--	--
Jewish engagement					
Personal	--	--	--	--	--
Participant	--	--	--	--	--
Holiday	67	15	8	5	6
Communal	62	19	5	8	9
Immersed	30	25	38	2	9
Lifestage					
Parent Pre-K	27	18	50	1	6
Parent K-12	53	17	22	5	6
Couple 22-39	--	--	--	--	--
Couple 40-69	53	22	12	5	10
Couple 70+	57	21	13	7	5
Single 22-39	--	--	--	--	--
Single 40-69	47	18	17	8	11
Single 70+	58	26	9	4	7
Multigenerational	51	21	16	7	8
Financial situation					
Struggling	35	18	34	7	13
Enough	48	20	21	7	7
Extra	50	21	19	5	8
Well-off	58	22	9	4	9

Denominational affiliation is distinct from synagogue membership, and individuals who identify with a particular denomination do not necessarily belong to congregations that align with that denomination (Table 5.4). For example, 73% of Orthodox Jewish adults are members of Orthodox synagogues, 27% of Conservative Jewish adults are members of Conservative synagogues, and 34% of Reform Jewish adults are members of Reform synagogues.

Table 5.4. Types of congregation membership by denomination of Jewish adults (%)

Denomination	Member of any congregation (%)	Orthodox (%)	Conservative (%)	Reform (%)	Reconstructionist (%)	Other/no denomination (%)	Chabad (%)	Independent minyan (%)	Other types (%)
Orthodox[40]	89	**73**	3	< 1	0	1	17	9	3
Conservative	48	6	**27**	4	< 1	2	4	4	5
Reform	42	< 1	1	**34**	< 1	1	1	1	3
Other	57	4	2	3	13	13	3	9	15
None	12	1	2	2	< 1	1	2	2	2

Note: Total of congregation types exceeds total membership percentage because individuals can belong to more than one congregation type.

[40] Among Orthodox adults who report not belonging to a Jewish congregation are some people who discontinued membership during the COVID-19 pandemic. Also included in this number are some who identify as Orthodox but do not regularly observe Shabbat, keep kosher, or attend services.

Although one-in-three Jewish adults (35%) are currently part of a synagogue-member household, another 29% were synagogue members at an earlier time in their adult life. The remainder, 36%, never belonged to a synagogue as an adult (Table 5.5).

Table 5.5. Current and past synagogue membership

	Current members (%)	Former members (%)	Never members (%)	Total (%)
All Jewish adults	35	29	36	100
Region				
City Far North	61	14	25	100
City North	29	20	51	100
City Other	27	23	51	100
Near North Suburbs	37	27	36	100
North Suburbs Cook	43	34	23	100
North Suburbs Lake	42	37	20	100
Near NW Suburbs	30	37	34	100
Far NW Suburbs	22	35	43	100
West Suburbs	29	27	44	100
South Suburbs	--	--	--	--
Jewish engagement				
Personal	< 1	26	74	100
Participant	6	41	53	100
Holiday	26	41	33	100
Communal	63	22	14	100
Immersed	79	13	9	100
Lifestage				
Parent Pre-K	40	13	47	100
Parent K-12	50	22	29	100
Couple 22-39	26	13	61	100
Couple 40-69	33	33	34	100
Couple 70+	41	35	24	100
Single 22-39	23	12	66	100
Single 40-69	20	30	50	100
Single 70+	27	40	33	100
Multigenerational	42	32	26	100
Financial situation				
Struggling	35	31	34	100
Enough	33	29	38	100
Extra	37	23	40	100
Well-off	39	26	35	100

Religious services

Just over half of Jewish adults (54%) attended some type of religious service at least once in the six months prior to the study, and 18% attended religious services monthly or more (Table 5.6). Close to half of Jewish adults (46%) attended a High Holiday service in 2020.

For most Jewish rituals, the Immersed engagement group participates at the highest rate, but for religious service attendance, the highest share is among the Communal engagement group. This discrepancy is likely because synagogues, limited to online services during the pandemic, were not accessible for most Orthodox Jews.

Even during the pandemic, nearly all synagogue members (90%) attended services at least once, whether in-person or online, and 85% attended High Holiday services. Among non-members, one-in-three Jewish adults (37%) attended regular services at least once, and more than one-in-four Jewish adults (28%) attended High Holiday services.

Table 5.6. Attendance at religious services, past six months and High Holidays 2020

	Ever in past 6 months (%)	Monthly or more, past 6 months (%)	High Holidays 2020 (%)
All Jewish adults	54	18	46
Region			
City Far North	70	41	62
City North	55	14	46
City Other	56	14	46
Near North Suburbs	54	20	45
North Suburbs Cook	60	22	51
North Suburbs Lake	60	20	55
Near NW Suburbs	55	15	45
Far NW Suburbs	51	11	42
West Suburbs	42	16	35
South Suburbs	--	--	--
Jewish engagement			
Personal	3	0	0
Participant	22	2	1
Holiday	72	9	60
Communal	98	31	94
Immersed	88	52	80
Lifestage			
Parent Pre-K	64	25	58
Parent K-12	60	26	52
Couple 22-39	56	13	50
Couple 40-69	53	17	47
Couple 70+	55	22	45
Single 22-39	57	14	46
Single 40-69	49	14	38
Single 70+	56	18	43
Multigenerational	56	20	49
Financial situation			
Struggling	55	18	49
Enough	53	17	44
Extra	54	22	47
Well-off	58	18	50
Synagogue member			
No	37	4	28
Yes	90	47	85

During the pandemic, synagogues offered various options for attending High Holiday services. Among the 46% of Jewish adults who attended a High Holiday service in 2020, 13% attended an indoors, in-person service, and 18% attended an outdoors, in-person service (Table 5.7). More than three-in-four Jewish adults who participated in any High Holiday service (77%) attended online. Among synagogue members who attended any High Holiday service, about three-in-four (74%) participated only in services conducted by their own congregation, 10% participated only in other congregation services, and 15% participated at their own congregation and others (not shown in table).

Table 5.7. Format of High Holiday service, among those who attended

	Jewish adults who attended High Holiday services in 2020 (%)
Indoors, in-person	13
Outdoors, in-person	18
Online	77
Something else	3

Based on their experiences in 2020, respondents projected what they preferred to do for High Holidays in 2021. Among the 46% of Jewish adults who attended High Holiday services in 2020, over one quarter (28%) preferred to attend in-person High Holiday services in the future, 38% said they would attend either in-person or online, 15% didn't know, and 19% did not intend to participate again (not shown in table).

Ritual observance at home

Aside from synagogue membership and participation in religious services, many Jews engage in home ritual observance. Rituals associated with the Sabbath include candle lighting and having a special meal (Table 5.8). Just over one third of Jewish households in Metropolitan Chicago (35%) lit Shabbat candles at least once in the last six months, and 10% lit candles almost always or always. About one third of Jewish households (32%) participated in a Shabbat meal at least once, and 8% participated in a Shabbat meal almost always or always.

Table 5.8. Shabbat observance in past six months

	Shabbat candles		Shabbat meal	
	Ever (%)	Almost always or always (%)	Ever (%)	Almost always or always (%)
All Jewish households	35	10	32	8
Region				
City Far North	50	26	51	23
City North	31	6	35	5
City Other	38	9	32	5
Near North Suburbs	40	14	32	10
North Suburbs Cook	44	11	36	9
North Suburbs Lake	48	10	44	6
Near NW Suburbs	40	9	33	5
Far NW Suburbs	26	4	20	2
West Suburbs	21	3	23	3
South Suburbs	--	--	--	--
Jewish engagement				
Personal	7	0	6	0
Participant	19	1	21	1
Holiday	44	8	38	5
Communal	61	13	55	7
Immersed	86	43	81	35
Lifestage				
Parent Pre-K	59	21	56	20
Parent K-12	43	16	38	12
Couple 22-39	28	6	35	5
Couple 40-69	32	7	30	6
Couple 70+	37	12	27	7
Single 22-39	37	8	40	6
Single 40-69	28	6	22	2
Single 70+	33	8	32	4
Multigenerational	40	10	34	7
Financial situation				
Struggling	44	12	37	8
Enough	35	10	33	7
Extra	33	10	33	8
Well-off	33	9	31	8
Synagogue member				
No	27	3	23	2
Yes	73	29	65	23

In spring 2020, three-in-five Jewish adults (60%) participated in a Passover seder, either in person or online (Table 5.9). More than four-in-five Jewish adults (82%) lit Hanukkah candles in a typical year. Just over two-in-five Jewish adults (42%) fasted on Yom Kippur in 2020 for at least part of the day. Thirteen percent of Jewish adults kept kosher at home.

Across all Jewish engagement categories, lighting Hanukkah candles was the most prevalent ritual behavior. Just over half of those in the Personal engagement group (52%) typically lit Hanukkah candles, compared to 22% who participated in a Passover seder.

Synagogue members are much more likely to engage in all four behaviors than those who do not belong to a synagogue. For example, 88% of synagogue members participated in a Passover seder in 2020, compared to 47% of non-members.

Table 5.9. Holiday and ritual observance

	Seder in 2020 (%)	Hanukkah candles in typical year (%)	Fasted on Yom Kippur 2020 (%)*	Keep kosher at home (%)
All Jewish adults	60	82	42	13
Region				
City Far North	79	90	65	44
City North	62	79	41	8
City Other	59	80	36	11
Near North Suburbs	59	83	41	17
North Suburbs Cook	60	89	46	11
North Suburbs Lake	72	88	49	9
Near NW Suburbs	62	80	44	6
Far NW Suburbs	45	79	30	3
West Suburbs	47	67	28	3
South Suburbs	--	--	--	--
Jewish engagement				
Personal	22	52	8	2
Participant	45	76	20	1
Holiday	68	91	47	6
Communal	85	97	62	10
Immersed	92	99	77	46
Lifestage				
Parent Pre-K	72	90	46	31
Parent K-12	72	90	53	21
Couple 22-39	69	83	45	9
Couple 40-69	57	79	40	9
Couple 70+	55	83	36	11
Single 22-39	66	73	45	10
Single 40-69	44	68	33	7
Single 70+	42	68	30	6
Multigenerational	68	89	46	13
Financial situation				
Struggling	57	84	41	19
Enough	60	83	42	11
Extra	63	78	43	12
Well-off	67	83	41	10
Synagogue member				
No	47	73	28	3
Yes	88	97	69	32

*An additional 14% of adults could not fast for medical reasons.

During the pandemic, when many in the Metropolitan Chicago Jewish community were homebound, many Jewish adults made changes in their religious and secular lives. Two-in-five Jewish adults (40%) indicated that they made some kind of change in their Jewish religious life, and 8% made more than one change.

Table 5.10 details the types of changes individuals made to their religious lives during the pandemic. Seventeen percent of Jewish adults attended religious services less often, and 8% decreased their level of observance for Shabbat or holidays. Other Jewish adults increased their participation in religious services (7%) or home-based observance (7%). Among Orthodox Jews, 47% reported that they attended religious services less often, compared to 27% of Conservative Jews and 15% of Reform Jews (not shown in table).

Table 5.10. Changes to Jewish religious life during pandemic

	All Jewish adults (%)
Any change	40
Attended services less often	17
Decreased level of observance for Shabbat or holidays	8
Attended services more often, in-person or online	7
Increased level of observance for Shabbat or holidays	7
Discontinued synagogue membership for financial reasons	2
Discontinued synagogue membership for non-financial reasons	2
Joined a congregation	1
Something else	5

Note: Respondents were able to choose more than one option.

In Table 5.11, we combine all of the categories above into changes that represented an increase or decrease in any aspect of Jewish religious life. Overall, 14% of Jewish adults increased their participation in Jewish religious life during the pandemic, and about one quarter of Jewish adults (26%) decreased their participation in Jewish religious life.

Table 5.11. Increase or decrease in aspects of Jewish religious life during pandemic

	Any change to Jewish life (%)	Increase in Jewish life (%)	Decrease in Jewish life (%)
All Jewish adults	40	14	26
Region			
City Far North	53	21	31
City North	42	15	28
City Other	46	16	31
Near North Suburbs	38	13	25
North Suburbs Cook	46	13	34
North Suburbs Lake	41	16	25
Near NW Suburbs	40	16	25
Far NW Suburbs	29	11	16
West Suburbs	29	9	20
South Suburbs	--	--	--
Jewish engagement			
Personal	15	1	12
Participant	29	6	23
Holiday	40	15	24
Communal	59	26	33
Immersed	66	26	43
Lifestage			
Parent Pre-K	51	15	37
Parent K-12	43	14	30
Couple 22-39	43	23	21
Couple 40-69	37	14	23
Couple 70+	37	11	25
Single 22-39	49	17	32
Single 40-69	36	10	21
Single 70+	35	13	22
Multigenerational	44	17	28
Financial situation			
Struggling	49	20	30
Enough	39	14	25
Extra	40	13	25
Well-off	40	12	29
Synagogue member			
No	29	8	21
Yes	64	28	38

CHAPTER 6. ORGANIZATIONS AND PROGRAMS

Jews in Metropolitan Chicago participate in a wide range of Jewish organizations and activities online and at home. Jewish adults may be members of organizations but not necessarily attend programs and activities sponsored by those organizations; conversely, they may participate in programs without being members of sponsoring organizations. This chapter offers details regarding this type of Jewish involvement.

Key findings

- About one-in-six Jewish households (16%) include someone who is a member of a Jewish organization or club (e.g., Hadassah, ADL, AJC,[41] youth group, AIPAC, or J Street). In 2010, 23% of households belonged to or regularly participated in a Jewish organization.
- One-in-ten Jewish households (10%) in Metropolitan Chicago include someone who belongs to an informal or grassroots Jewish group, such as a social *havurah* or Jewish book club.
- Over half of Jewish adults (56%) participated in at least one Jewish-sponsored program in the past year.
- Among Jewish young adults under age 40, 40% of couples and 41% of singles participated in a program sponsored by a Jewish young adult organization, including Hillel and Base Hillel, OneTable, Moishe House, Honeymoon Israel, and KAHAL.
- While program participation is universal among those in the Participant and Communal engagement groups, those in the Participant group had relatively low rates of synagogue membership (5%) and membership in Jewish organizations (16%).
- A Jewish household's financial status made no difference in terms of their Jewish program participation.
- About nine-in-ten Jewish adults (91%) discussed Jewish topics with family or friends in the past year, and just under one third (31%) discussed Jewish topics frequently. Almost as many Jewish adults (88%) ate Jewish food in the past year, and about one quarter of Jewish adults (26%) ate Jewish food frequently. More than four-in-five Jewish adults (82%) engaged in Jewish-focused culture (books, movies, TV, music), and about 20% of Jewish adults engaged in Jewish culture frequently. Just under three quarters of Jewish adults (73%) read at least one Jewish publication, and about 21% read a Jewish publication frequently.
- Jewish adults in the Personal engagement category tend not to be engaged in communal Jewish life, but they do engage in individual Jewish activities. Eighty-two percent of those in the Personal engagement group discussed a Jewish topic with family or friends in the past year,

[41] AJC is the American Jewish Committee.

about three-in-four Jewish adults (74%) ate a Jewish food, about 59% engaged in Jewish culture, and 41% read at least one Jewish publication.

Memberships and participation in programs

Metropolitan Chicago has many types of Jewish organizations in addition to synagogues and congregations. Twenty-two percent of Jewish households include someone who is a member of a Jewish organization, club, or informal Jewish group Street (Table 6.1). Sixteen percent of Jewish households include someone who is a member of a Jewish organization or club other than a synagogue, such as Hadassah, ADL, AJC, youth group, AIPAC, J Street. In 2010, 23% of Jewish households belonged to or regularly participated in a Jewish organization, and 8% of Jewish households were dues-paying members of a JCC.

Organizational memberships are one of the defining components of Jewish engagement. Jewish organizational memberships are most common among Jewish households in City Far North (23%), North Suburbs Cook (24%), and North Suburbs Lake (21%).

Only 2% of Jewish households in the Personal engagement group are members of a Jewish organization, while nearly one third of Jewish households in the Communal group (32%) and half of Jewish households (48%) in the Immersed group are members of a Jewish organization. Jewish households in the Participant group are more likely to be a member of a Jewish organization (16%) than those in the Holiday group (6%). Jewish organizational memberships are most common among those Jewish households with adults ages 70 and older, either couples (23%) or singles (26%).

Aside from Jewish organizational memberships, individuals in Jewish households may also belong to an informal or grassroots Jewish group, such as a social *havurah* or Jewish book club. Overall, 10% of Jewish households in Metropolitan Chicago include someone who belongs to an informal Jewish group. Among Jewish households with singles ages 22-39, 20% belong to one or more of these groups.

Jewish households that are financially well-off are more likely to belong to Jewish organizations (21%) compared to other households, but there is no difference in financial status in relation to belonging to informal Jewish groups.

Table 6.1. Organization and group memberships

	Member of Jewish organization or club (%)	Belong to informal or grassroots Jewish group (%)	Member of any organization, formal or informal (%)
All Jewish households	16	10	22
Region			
City Far North	23	14	29
City North	15	11	21
City Other	17	12	23
Near North Suburbs	18	11	22
North Suburbs Cook	24	15	33
North Suburbs Lake	21	9	25
Near NW Suburbs	16	11	21
Far NW Suburbs	11	10	17
West Suburbs	12	9	17
South Suburbs	--	--	--
Jewish engagement			
Personal	2	2	3
Participant	16	11	25
Holiday	6	5	10
Communal	32	19	41
Immersed	48	30	57
Lifestage			
Parent Pre-K	11	8	17
Parent K-12	18	9	22
Couple 22-39	13	10	19
Couple 40-69	16	9	21
Couple 70+	23	13	30
Single 22-39	16	20	28
Single 40-69	17	10	21
Single 70+	26	15	34
Multigenerational	18	10	22
Financial situation			
Struggling	16	11	20
Enough	18	11	24
Extra	15	11	22
Well-off	21	12	28

Jewish-sponsored program participation is one of the defining behaviors used to create the Index of Jewish Engagement. More than half (56%) of Jewish adults participated in at least one Jewish-sponsored program in the past year (Table 6.2). By region, the highest level of program participation was in City Far North (76%) and in North Suburbs Lake (67%).

Among Jewish adults ages 40 and under, 22% participated in at least one Jewish young adult program, including programs sponsored by Hillel and Base Hillel, OneTable, Moishe House, Honeymoon Israel, and KAHAL. For this group, the region with the highest participation in any of these programs is City Other (42%).

While program participation was universal among those in the Participant and Communal engagement groups, those in the Participant group had low rates of membership to synagogues (refer to Table 5.1) and Jewish organizations (refer to Table 6.1). Fifty-two percent of Jewish adults ages 40 and under in each of the Participant and Communal engagement groups attended Jewish young adult programs. Participation in Jewish-sponsored programs was not universal among those in the Immersed group (94%) but still very high. Program participation was lowest among the Holiday (11%) and Personal (4%) engagement groups.

Among Jewish young adults under age 40, 40% of couples and 41% of singles participated in a Jewish young adult program. Participation in Jewish young adult programs was highest among Jewish adults in City Other (42%) and City North (35%). Very few parents under age 40 participated in Jewish young adult programs. Financial status had no bearing on Jewish-sponsored program participation.

Table 6.2. Participation in at least one Jewish-sponsored program, past year

	Any program (%)	Any young-adult program (age 40 or under) (%)
All Jewish adults	56	22
Region		
City Far North	76	31
City North	61	35
City Other	57	42
Near North Suburbs	54	25
North Suburbs Cook	63	--
North Suburbs Lake	67	15
Near NW Suburbs	57	--
Far NW Suburbs	43	--
West Suburbs	41	--
South Suburbs	--	--
Jewish engagement		
Personal	5	3
Participant	100	52
Holiday	11	1
Communal	100	52
Immersed	94	51
Lifestage		
Parent Pre-K	58	9
Parent K-12	62	3
Couple 22-39	59	40
Couple 40-69	54	--
Couple 70+	62	n/a
Single 22-39	63	41
Single 40-69	45	--
Single 70+	61	n/a
Multigenerational	62	--
Financial situation		
Struggling	55	23
Enough	56	29
Extra	58	31
Well-off	64	36

Forty-four percent of all Jewish adults did not participate in any program in the past year, either in-person or online; 35% participated one to three times; 10% participated four to nine times, and 11% participated 10 or more times (Table 6.3).

Nearly all Jewish adults in the Participant, Communal, and Immersed engagement groups attended at least one-Jewish sponsored program in the past year. However, the frequency of attendance varied across these groups. Among the Immersed group, 38% attended ten or more times; in the Communal group, 14% attended ten or more times; and in the Participant group, 5% attended ten or more times.

Table 6.3. Frequency of program participation either in-person or online, past year*

	Never (%)	1-3 times (%)	4-9 times (%)	10+ times (%)
All Jewish adults	44	35	10	11
Region				
City Far North	24	40	13	22
City North	39	35	12	13
City Other	43	38	10	9
Near North Suburbs	46	33	10	11
North Suburbs Cook	37	44	9	11
North Suburbs Lake	33	37	17	13
Near NW Suburbs	43	38	10	9
Far NW Suburbs	57	30	9	4
West Suburbs	59	24	8	9
South Suburbs	--	--	--	--
Jewish engagement				
Personal	95	5	0	< 1
Participant	0	87	8	5
Holiday	89	10	< 1	1
Communal	< 1	61	25	14
Immersed	6	36	21	38
Lifestage				
Parent Pre-K	42	36	10	12
Parent K-12	38	36	14	13
Couple 22-39	41	38	11	10
Couple 40-69	46	35	10	9
Couple 70+	38	39	11	12
Single 22-39	37	34	15	15
Single 40-69	55	28	10	8
Single 70+	39	38	11	12
Multigenerational	38	37	10	14
Financial situation				
Struggling	45	35	10	9
Enough	44	34	11	12
Extra	42	35	12	12
Well-off	36	39	12	13

*Respondents who indicated that they participated in at least one program, but did not indicate frequency, were categorized as "1-3 times."

Jewish-sponsored programs attracted different constituencies depending on the subject type. Among all Jewish adults, 23% attended a program in the previous year that could be characterized as primarily educational, like a class or lecture; 19% attended cultural programs such as concerts, theater, films, or museums; and 19% participated in religious programs other than religious services, such as holiday celebrations (Table 6.4). Fifteen percent of Jewish adults attended primarily charitable programs including fundraisers. Nine percent of Jewish adults attended primarily social programs such as sports leagues, bar nights, parties, or dances, and 6% attended political programs including rallies and marches.

Among the Immersed and Communal engagement groups, participation was highest in educational (62% and 42% respectively) and religious programs (52% and 41% respectively). In contrast, the Participant group attended educational (23%) and cultural (26%) programs most often.

Table 6.4. Type of programs or activities attended, past year (Programs were primarily…)

	Educational (%)	Cultural (%)	Religious (%)	Charitable (%)	Social (%)	Political (%)
All Jewish adults	23	19	19	15	9	6
Region						
City Far North	42	24	41	21	12	9
City North	26	20	20	15	15	9
City Other	23	19	25	16	14	10
Near North Suburbs	27	19	18	12	7	4
North Suburbs Cook	24	22	14	16	8	7
North Suburbs Lake	29	27	27	25	9	6
Near NW Suburbs	20	17	17	11	10	3
Far NW Suburbs	13	11	10	8	6	1
West Suburbs	20	15	15	10	8	8
South Suburbs	--	--	--	--	--	--
Jewish engagement						
Personal	< 1	1	0	< 1	1	1
Participant	23	26	11	15	14	5
Holiday	2	2	2	1	0	1
Communal	42	33	41	23	20	11
Immersed	62	41	52	37	18	16
Lifestage						
Parent Pre-K	25	12	33	21	17	3
Parent K-12	30	18	27	20	9	7
Couple 22-39	23	17	24	9	22	10
Couple 40-69	25	22	14	17	5	7
Couple 70+	28	24	16	16	5	4
Single 22-39	20	17	23	9	24	10
Single 40-69	20	16	15	10	7	7
Single 70+	25	26	20	14	6	6
Multigenerational	28	22	26	15	9	7
Financial situation						
Struggling	22	20	24	11	6	5
Enough	25	19	20	14	10	6
Extra	26	19	21	16	12	7
Well-off	29	21	20	18	12	8

A wide variety of Metropolitan Chicago Jewish organizations sponsored the online and in-person programming favored by survey respondents. About one-in-four Jewish adults (27%) attended a program sponsored by a synagogue or congregation, aside from religious services (Table 6.5). In the period prior to the survey, nearly equal numbers of Jewish adults participated online and in person, with 7% in-person only, 8% online only, and 12% doing both. Twenty-three percent of Jewish adults participated in at least one program sponsored by The Illinois Holocaust Museum in Skokie. Twelve percent of Jewish adults participated in a program sponsored by the Jewish United Fund/Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago, and 12% participated in a program sponsored by Chabad. In addition to named programs, 4% of Jewish adults attended programs sponsored by advocacy and social action organizations like AIPAC, J Street, Avodah, and NCJW. Among Jewish adults ages 40 and younger, 14% attended a program sponsored by Hillel/Base Hillel, and 11% attended a OneTable program.

Table 6.5. Sponsors of Jewish programs attended in past year

	Any (%)	In-person only (%)	Online only (%)	Both (%)
All Jewish adults				
Program sponsors, listed				
A congregation or synagogue in Metro Chicago*	27	7	8	12
Illinois Holocaust Museum	23	12	7	4
Jewish United Fund/Jewish Federation	12	3	6	3
A Chabad in Metro Chicago	12	6	4	2
A JCC in Metro Chicago	9	5	2	2
A Jewish professional network	7	1	3	2
A day school in Metro Chicago	5	1	1	3
Jewish Council on Urban Affairs	5	1	3	1
Spertus Institute for Jewish Learning and Leadership	5	2	2	1
ADL	5	1	4	1
Hadassah Chicago North Shore	4	1	2	1
Jewish Women's International	1	< 1	1	< 1
Orot Center for New Jewish Learning	1	< 1	1	< 1
SVARA	1	< 1	< 1	< 1
Other program sponsors, write-in**				
Advocacy or social action (e.g., AIPAC, J Street, Avodah, NCJW)	4	n/a	n/a	n/a
Jewish education (e.g., camps, youth groups, adult classes)	3	n/a	n/a	n/a
Social service agencies (e.g., JFCS, CJE, Keshet)	3	n/a	n/a	n/a
Arts and culture (e.g., Jewish Book Council, film festivals, museums)	2	n/a	n/a	n/a
Jewish orgs. outside Chicago (e.g., synagogues, Chabad, federations, museums)	2	n/a	n/a	n/a
Program sponsors, young adults (ages 40 and younger)				
Hillel/Base Hillel	14	6	4	5
OneTable	11	5	2	3
Moishe House	6	3	2	1
Honeymoon Israel	3	< 1	1	2
KAHAL: Your Jewish Home Abroad	2	< 1	2	1

*Includes Mishkan Chicago.

** The survey allowed respondents to indicate program sponsors from a list of organizations and the option to add other organization names. For listed sponsors, respondents indicated whether they participated in-person or online. For the responses that they wrote in, they did not provide the program format. The write-in organizations were classified and are listed in the table by type.

Participation in the four organizations that attracted the largest share of Jewish adults varied significantly by region, lifestage, and level of Jewish engagement. City Far North had the largest share of Jewish adults who participated in synagogue and congregational programming (43%), and Far NW suburbs had the smallest share (13%) (Table 6.6). Nearly two thirds of those in the Immersed engagement group (64%) participated in a synagogue-based program.

Table 6.6. Characteristics of participants in select organizations' programs

	A congregation or synagogue in Metro Chicago (%)	Illinois Holocaust Museum (%)	JUF/Jewish United Fund (%)	A Chabad in Metro Chicago (%)
All Jewish adults	27	23	12	12
Region				
City Far North	43	23	17	19
City North	27	20	20	11
City Other	21	13	10	13
Near North Suburbs	29	26	8	12
North Suburbs Cook	29	37	15	9
North Suburbs Lake	33	30	19	10
Near NW Suburbs	27	29	9	13
Far NW Suburbs	13	17	5	12
West Suburbs	28	11	9	6
South Suburbs	--	--	--	--
Jewish engagement				
Personal	< 1	2	1	0
Participant	20	47	9	11
Holiday	2	5	3	< 1
Communal	55	36	23	19
Immersed	64	35	30	30
Lifestage				
Parent Pre-K	34	9	26	16
Parent K-12	36	20	12	18
Couple 22-39	23	13	18	12
Couple 40-69	25	27	9	6
Couple 70+	31	35	12	11
Single 22-39	23	10	21	12
Single 40-69	22	20	7	6
Single 70+	24	39	10	6
Multigenerational	31	25	14	15
Financial situation				
Struggling	27	21	13	14
Enough	26	21	12	11
Extra	28	24	13	11
Well-off	32	26	15	10

Individual and online activities

Jewish life extends beyond organizational boundaries to activities that take place in the home, with friends, and online. Examples of individual activities include discussing Jewish topics with family or friends; reading Jewish publications; eating Jewish foods; and participating in Jewish-focused culture and entertainment such as movies, TV, books, or music.

Almost all Jewish adults (91%) discussed a Jewish topic in the past year with family or friends, and just under one third (31%) discussed a Jewish topic frequently (Table 6.7). Almost as many Jewish adults (88%) ate Jewish food in the past year, and about one quarter (26%) ate Jewish food frequently. More than 82% of Jewish adults engaged in Jewish-focused culture, and 20% engaged in Jewish-focused culture frequently. Just under three quarters of Jewish adults (73%) read at least one Jewish publication, and 21% read a Jewish publication frequently.

Individuals in the Personal engagement group tend not to be members of Jewish organizations or attend Jewish organization-sponsored programs but do engage in Jewish personal activities. Eighty-two percent of those in the Personal engagement group discussed a Jewish topic with friends or family, 74% ate a Jewish food, 59% engaged in Jewish culture, and 41% read at least one Jewish publication.

Table 6.7. Individual activities, past year

	Jewish topics		Jewish foods		Jewish culture		Jewish publications	
	Ever (%)	Frequently (%)	Ever (%)	Frequently (%)	Ever (%)	Frequently (%)	Ever (%)	Frequently (%)
All Jewish adults	91	31	88	26	82	20	73	21
Region								
City Far North	97	49	91	43	92	32	86	43
City North	94	34	90	24	81	17	71	18
City Other	89	28	91	23	78	12	68	13
Near North Suburbs	92	34	88	30	83	25	75	26
North Suburbs Cook	94	31	92	23	90	24	77	24
North Suburbs Lake	95	37	92	32	87	27	74	28
Near NW Suburbs	87	33	86	25	78	20	76	21
Far NW Suburbs	90	25	92	20	78	12	71	12
West Suburbs	91	20	81	14	63	11	54	14
South Suburbs	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Jewish engagement								
Personal	82	4	74	7	59	1	41	2
Participant	91	20	86	14	80	9	70	9
Holiday	92	28	93	24	83	16	74	14
Communal	98	29	97	21	93	7	88	6
Immersed	99	88	100	70	99	71	100	84
Lifestage								
Parent Pre-K	82	37	88	31	71	16	68	21
Parent K-12	95	40	86	32	84	25	78	29
Couple 22-39	97	27	89	17	79	10	63	9
Couple 40-69	96	29	90	26	83	23	74	22
Couple 70+	87	30	87	29	81	22	72	25
Single 22-39	98	43	91	28	80	16	75	16
Single 40-69	87	29	88	22	78	17	71	24
Single 70+	88	27	93	28	86	25	73	26
Multigenerational	94	35	93	24	89	20	78	24
Financial situation								
Struggling	91	34	91	31	80	20	71	28
Enough	91	34	90	27	84	22	76	21
Extra	91	33	85	23	78	18	71	19
Well-off	95	31	91	25	84	19	73	22

Jewish online offerings were considerably enhanced during the pandemic, potentially enabling many in Metropolitan Chicago to engage in Jewish life in new ways.

The survey asked specifically about searching for Jewish resources and information online; watching, listening to, or joining a Jewish religious service online; watching, listening to, or joining a Jewish program, class, or activity online; and communicating with Jewish groups using social media.

Just over half of Jewish adults (52%) searched for Jewish resources and information online in the past six months, and 13% searched for this information frequently (Table 6.8). Half of Jewish adults (50%) watched, listened to, or joined a Jewish religious service online in the past six months, and 8% participated in an online religious service at least ten times. Forty-two percent of Jewish adults watched, listened to, or joined a Jewish program, class, or activity, and 29% of Jewish adults communicated with Jewish groups using social media.

Table 6.8. Online Jewish activities, past six months

	Searched for Jewish resources and information		Joined a Jewish religious service		Joined a Jewish program, class, or activity		Communicated with Jewish groups using social media	
	Ever (%)	10+ times (%)	Ever (%)	10+ times (%)	Ever (%)	10+ times (%)	Ever (%)	10+ times (%)
All Jewish adults	52	13	50	8	42	9	29	10
Region								
City Far North	69	32	54	11	55	22	46	23
City North	50	10	49	7	39	7	32	9
City Other	55	12	45	8	41	8	28	10
Near North Suburbs	49	15	50	11	43	12	33	15
North Suburbs Cook	54	15	55	10	39	7	29	10
North Suburbs Lake	62	18	64	11	52	12	30	9
Near NW Suburbs	57	11	45	7	46	6	29	8
Far NW Suburbs	41	6	50	4	39	4	21	5
West Suburbs	49	10	48	8	32	8	26	7
South Suburbs	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Jewish engagement								
Personal	19	2	6	0	7	1	9	5
Participant	56	5	23	1	34	5	19	2
Holiday	50	9	62	4	32	3	24	7
Communal	67	11	90	13	64	8	45	11
Immersed	87	47	75	24	83	32	60	29
Lifestage								
Parent Pre-K	55	15	42	6	42	8	36	12
Parent K-12	61	22	48	9	51	13	38	13
Couple 22-39	54	10	54	5	34	3	35	7
Couple 40-69	57	13	52	9	46	7	26	9
Couple 70+	45	12	54	13	45	12	19	4
Single 22-39	55	15	53	8	40	9	42	13
Single 40-69	48	13	44	10	38	10	27	12
Single 70+	41	7	52	8	43	9	19	7
Multigenerational	58	17	57	8	43	13	38	17
Financial situation								
Struggling	53	17	46	8	40	10	39	18
Enough	54	15	49	8	43	9	33	11
Extra	53	15	53	11	44	9	29	9
Well-off	55	12	55	8	44	11	26	8

The COVID-19 pandemic sparked new opportunities for online Jewish life. When asked about their involvement in virtual Jewish life during the crisis, about half of all Jewish adults (51%) indicated they participated in a new Jewish activity online (Table 6.9). One third of Jewish adults (33%) participated in an online Jewish life cycle event; 23% of Jewish adults accessed new online Jewish resources; 23% of Jewish adults participated in new Jewish online programs, classes, or activities; and 10% of Jewish adults made new virtual connections with Jewish people. As previous research has shown,[42] those who were most involved in Jewish life prior to the pandemic were most likely to try out new online activities. Among the Immersed engagement group, 85% participated in a new online activity during the pandemic, compared to 15% of Jewish adults in the Personal group.

[42] https://forward.com/scribe/455166/online-services-serve-the-already-committed-our-research-shows/

Table 6.9. Online involvement in Jewish life during pandemic

	Any new activity (%)	Participated in an online Jewish life cycle event (%)	Accessed new online Jewish resources (%)	New Jewish online programs, classes, or activities (%)	Made new virtual connections with Jewish people (%)
All Jewish adults	51	33	23	23	10
Region					
City Far North	65	43	29	35	22
City North	53	34	22	24	12
City Other	55	28	26	20	15
Near North Suburbs	56	36	26	22	11
North Suburbs Cook	47	31	17	21	9
North Suburbs Lake	60	42	25	30	9
Near NW Suburbs	49	31	24	23	11
Far NW Suburbs	36	19	22	12	7
West Suburbs	40	23	19	21	7
South Suburbs	--	--	--	--	--
Jewish engagement					
Personal	15	9	4	1	3
Participant	40	23	15	12	7
Holiday	48	27	24	14	7
Communal	78	47	33	40	17
Immersed	85	61	43	52	25
Lifestage					
Parent Pre-K	53	30	24	25	12
Parent K-12	55	38	27	26	10
Couple 22-39	54	34	20	26	15
Couple 40-69	52	34	22	22	9
Couple 70+	48	34	20	23	7
Single 22-39	54	27	24	24	23
Single 40-69	45	22	21	17	12
Single 70+	49	32	26	26	7
Multigenerational	60	36	26	28	16
Financial situation					
Struggling	55	30	26	25	17
Enough	50	30	22	22	13
Extra	52	34	22	25	10
Well-off	54	37	24	24	8

CHAPTER 7. PHILANTHROPY AND VOLUNTEERING

Charitable donations and volunteering are ways in which Jewish adults support their community and a wide variety of organizations and causes. This chapter explores support for Jewish and non-Jewish causes among Jewish households.

Key findings

- Most Jewish households (80%) in Metropolitan Chicago engage in charitable giving. Just over half of households (51%) gave to at least one Jewish charity or cause in the previous year, and another 29% donated to a non-Jewish organization.
- Forty-three percent of Jewish adults volunteered in the past year. Sixteen percent of Jewish adults volunteered for at least one Jewish organization, including 7% who volunteered exclusively for Jewish organizations. Another 27% volunteered exclusively for a non-Jewish organization. One third of Jewish adults who are struggling financially volunteered for any organization.
- Congregations and synagogues are the most frequent recipients of donations from Jewish households (does not include dues and tuition). Among Jewish households that donated to Jewish organizations, 37% donated to congregations and synagogues, and 20% listed these institutions as one of their top three causes for charitable giving.
- Human services (e.g., homelessness, poverty, food insecurity, counseling, domestic abuse) is the second most frequent category of charitable giving. Thirty-five percent of Jewish donor households contributed to Jewish human service organizations, and 15% chose it as one of their top three causes.
- Among donor Jewish households, 25% donated to an Israel-related organization, and 9% listed Israel-related causes as one of their top three options.
- Among all Jewish households, 11% donated to the Jewish United Fund (JUF)/Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago. Of Jewish households that donated to any Jewish organization, 22% gave to JUF.

Charitable giving

Most Jewish households (80%) in Metropolitan Chicago engage in charitable giving (Table 7.1). Just over half of households (51%) gave to at least one Jewish charity or cause in the previous year, and another 29% donated to a non-Jewish organization. Giving to Jewish causes in Metropolitan Chicago has declined since 2010 when 65% of households gave to a Jewish charity or cause. Nationally, 48% of Jewish adults gave to a Jewish charity or cause.[43]

[43] Pew Research Center, 2021.

Jewish engagement is associated with different levels and types of charitable giving. Among Immersed and Communal engagement group households, nearly all made at least some charitable donation, but the Immersed group households donated to Jewish causes at a higher rate (94%) than did the Communal group (77%). In contrast, those in the Personal group had the lowest rate of giving to any cause, and 23% made no charitable donations at all.

Although there were not large differences in overall donations by lifestage and age, Jewish donations were higher among older couples (65%) and older singles (69%) than for younger aged households.

Although a household's financial situation is a strong predictor of charitable giving (94% of financially well-off households give to charitable causes), 58% of households that are financially struggling also give to charitable causes.

Table 7.1. Household donations to Jewish and non-Jewish organizations in previous year

	Any donation (%)	Any Jewish donation (%)	Both Jewish and non-Jewish orgs (%)	Jewish orgs. only (%)	Non-Jewish orgs. only (%)	No donation (%)
All Jewish households	80	51	47	4	29	15
Region						
City Far North	80	54	40	14	26	18
City North	86	47	44	3	39	10
City Other	79	39	37	2	46	13
Near North Suburbs	83	54	49	5	25	16
North Suburbs Cook	82	64	61	3	19	12
North Suburbs Lake	74	68	65	3	14	13
Near NW Suburbs	71	55	48	7	19	17
Far NW Suburbs	85	43	42	1	28	20
West Suburbs	80	43	42	1	33	15
South Suburbs	--	--	--	--	--	--
Jewish engagement						
Personal	68	18	18	0	50	23
Participant	83	45	44	1	38	13
Holiday	79	57	51	6	22	14
Communal	91	77	73	4	14	6
Immersed	95	94	79	15	1	3
Lifestage						
Parent Pre-K	74	48	39	9	26	23
Parent K-12	81	46	40	6	35	12
Couple 22-39	85	31	30	1	54	11
Couple 40-69	85	59	57	2	26	9
Couple 70+	85	65	61	4	20	13
Single 22-39	76	38	32	6	38	20
Single 40-69	80	53	48	5	27	19
Single 70+	84	69	64	5	15	14
Multigenerational	78	49	47	2	29	12
Financial situation						
Struggling	58	40	34	6	18	31
Enough	81	52	47	5	29	14
Extra	90	52	49	3	38	9
Well-off	94	59	57	2	35	3

Note: Table excludes 5% of households that did not know the type of their charitable giving.

Congregations and synagogues are the most frequent recipients of donations from Jewish households (does not include dues and tuition). (Table 7.2). Among Jewish households that donated to Jewish organizations, 37% donated to congregations and synagogues, and 20% listed congregations as one of their top three causes. Jewish human services-related organizations (e.g., those addressing homelessness, poverty, food insecurity, counseling, domestic abuse) were the second most prevalent category for charitable giving. Thirty-five percent of Jewish donor households contributed to Jewish human service organizations, and 15% chose this category as one of their top three causes. Among Jewish donor households, 25% donated to an Israel-related organization, and 9% listed Israel as one of their top three causes.

Table 7.2. Top causes for donations to Jewish organizations (% of Jewish households)

	Cause of interest, of households that donate to Jewish orgs. (%)	Top cause, of households that donate to Jewish orgs. (%)	Cause of interest, all Jewish households (%)	Top cause, all Jewish households (%)
Congregation/synagogue (aside from dues)	37	20	19	10
Human services	35	15	18	7
Israel	25	9	13	5
Education (not including tuition)	22	9	11	4
Antisemitism	22	5	11	2
Holocaust education	20	6	10	3
Social justice	20	5	10	3
Health	14	4	7	2
Disabilities	10	2	5	1
Older adults	10	2	5	1
Arts and culture	9	2	5	1
Teen/youth groups	8	2	4	1
Research and public policy	6	< 1	3	< 1
Environment	5	1	3	< 1
Something else	1	1	< 1	< 1

Question text: "You said that last year you donated to the causes listed below. As best as you can estimate, to which cause did you give the most? Select up to 3."

Respondents were asked separately about their donations to non-Jewish causes (Table 7.3). Among Jewish donor households, 64% contributed to non-Jewish organizations related to human services (e.g., homelessness, poverty, food insecurity, counseling, domestic abuse). Over one third of Jewish donor households (37%) listed human services as a top cause. Almost half of contributions were directed to non-Jewish organizations focused on social justice causes (49%); 29% of donors to non-Jewish organizations listed it as a top cause.

Table 7.3. Top causes for donations to non-Jewish organizations (% of Jewish households)

	Causes of interest, of households that donated to non-Jewish orgs (%)	Top cause, of households that donated to non-Jewish orgs (%)	Cause of interest, all Jewish households (%)	Top cause, all Jewish households (%)
Human services	64	37	48	28
Social justice	49	29	37	22
Health	42	21	32	16
Education (not including tuition)	32	13	24	10
Arts and culture	37	15	28	11
Animals	30	13	23	10
Environment	30	10	22	7
Disabilities	20	7	15	6
Research and public policy	16	4	12	3
International	13	3	10	2
Politics*	3	n/a	3	n/a
Something else	2	1	1	1

Question text: You said that last year you donated to the causes listed below. As best as you can estimate, to which cause did you give the most? Select up to 3.
*"Politics" was a write-in response and could not have been selected as a top cause

Among all Jewish households, 11% donated to the Jewish United Fund (JUF)/Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago (Table 7.4). This share represents 22% of Jewish households that donated to Jewish organizations.

Giving to JUF is related to other measures of Jewish engagement. Among Immersed engagement group households, 29% donated to JUF, in contrast to 2% of Personal group households. Jewish households with older adults, both couples and singles, were most likely to donate to JUF, including 19% of couples ages 70 or older and 22% of singles ages 70 or older.

In addition to philanthropic giving, 4% of Jewish households designated a Jewish organization as a beneficiary in their will or estate planning (not shown in table). Twenty-four percent of Jewish households indicated that they do not have a will.

Table 7.4. Donations to JUF

	All Jewish households (%)	Households that donated to Jewish orgs (%)
All Jewish households	11	22
Region		
City Far North	9	17
City North	14	31
City Other	5	12
Near North Suburbs	13	24
North Suburbs Cook	16	25
North Suburbs Lake	16	24
Near NW Suburbs	13	24
Far NW Suburbs	7	16
West Suburbs	8	18
South Suburbs	--	--
Jewish engagement		
Personal	2	9
Participant	8	17
Holiday	9	16
Communal	20	27
Immersed	29	31
Lifestage		
Parent Pre-K	12	24
Parent K-12	10	22
Couple 22-39	5	15
Couple 40-69	11	19
Couple 70+	19	30
Single 22-39	8	21
Single 40-69	9	17
Single 70+	22	32
Multigenerational	10	20
Financial situation		
Struggling	5	14
Enough	11	20
Extra	11	22
Well-off	18	31

Volunteering

Volunteering, whether for a Jewish organization or a non-Jewish organization, is less prevalent than charitable giving among Jewish households in Metropolitan Chicago. Forty-three percent of Jewish adults (43%) volunteered in the past year (Table 7.5). Sixteen percent of Jewish adults volunteered for at least one Jewish organization, including 7% who volunteered exclusively for Jewish organizations. Another 27% volunteered exclusively for a non-Jewish organization.

Volunteering of any kind is least likely in the Near NW Suburbs (31%) and Far NW Suburbs (34%) and most likely in City North (53%). Jewish volunteering is most likely in City Far North (26%) and North Suburbs Lake (23%). Volunteering for exclusively non-Jewish organizations is most prevalent in City North (35%), City Other (36%), and the West Suburbs (36%).

There is a strong relationship between Jewish engagement group category and Jewish volunteering. Overall rates of volunteering are highest among the Immersed (58%) and Communal (55%) groups; however, those in the Immersed group are more likely to volunteer with Jewish organizations (46%) than those in the Communal group (27%). Among other engagement groups, those in the Participant group have the highest rate of volunteering (43%), but the majority of those Jewish adults (34%) volunteer only for non-Jewish organizations.

About one third of Jewish adults (34%) who were financially struggling volunteered for any organization in the past year. More than half of financially well-off Jewish adults (53%) volunteered for any organization.

Table 7.5. Volunteering for Jewish and non-Jewish organizations, past year

	Volunteered for any org. (%)	Any Jewish org. (%)	Both Jewish and NJ orgs. (%)	Jewish orgs. only (%)	NJ orgs. only (%)
All Jewish adults	43	16	9	7	27
Region					
City Far North	46	26	7	19	20
City North	53	18	12	6	35
City Other	49	13	9	4	36
Near North Suburbs	40	16	6	10	23
North Suburbs Cook	46	17	10	7	30
North Suburbs Lake	48	23	14	9	25
Near NW Suburbs	31	12	7	5	20
Far NW Suburbs	34	10	5	5	24
West Suburbs	50	15	12	3	36
South Suburbs	--		--	--	--
Jewish engagement					
Personal	36	0	0	0	36
Participant	43	9	5	4	34
Holiday	31	2	1	1	28
Communal	55	27	17	10	28
Immersed	58	46	22	24	12
Lifestage					
Parent Pre-K	36	19	5	14	17
Parent K-12	57	26	13	13	32
Couple 22-39	52	13	7	6	39
Couple 40-69	45	15	9	6	30
Couple 70+	38	17	11	6	20
Single 22-39	47	15	9	6	32
Single 40-69	39	14	8	6	25
Single 70+	36	15	4	11	22
Multigenerational	46	16	10	6	30
Financial situation					
Struggling	34	14	6	8	20
Enough	39	15	8	7	24
Extra	54	19	10	9	35
Well-off	53	20	13	7	33

Among those who volunteered for a Jewish organization, the type of organization selected most frequently was human services (49%), followed by education (32%), and social justice (29%) (Table 7.6). Eight percent chose a category not listed, mentioning among other types of organizations, arts and Israel.

Table 7.6. Top causes for volunteering with Jewish organizations (% of Jewish adults)

	Of volunteers for Jewish orgs. (%)	All Jewish adults (%)
Human services	49	8
Education	32	5
Social justice	29	5
Synagogue*	9	1
Disabilities and accessibility	8	1
Environment and climate change	4	1
Animal care and welfare	3	< 1
Disaster relief	3	< 1
Something else	8	1

*"Synagogue" was not offered as a survey option but was given as a write-in response.

Those Jewish adults who volunteered for non-Jewish organizations chose the same top three causes but in a slightly different order (Table 7.7). Volunteering for non-Jewish human services organizations was chosen most frequently (43%), followed by organizations focused on social justice (35%) and education (28%). About 21% chose an organization type not listed, including arts, professional associations, and health.

Table 7.7. Top causes for volunteering with non-Jewish organizations (% of Jewish adults)

	Of volunteers for non-Jewish orgs. (%)	All Jewish adults (%)
Human services	43	15
Social justice	35	12
Education	28	10
Politics*	13	5
Environment and climate change	11	4
Animal care and welfare	11	4
Disabilities and accessibility	9	3
Disaster relief	5	2
Something else	21	7

*"Politics" was not offered as a survey option but was given as a write-in response.

CHAPTER 8.
COMMUNITY, CONNECTIONS, AND CONCERNS

In addition to the measures of participation and belonging described in previous chapters, Jewish engagement is also expressed as feelings of connection to and concern for the local and worldwide Jewish community. This chapter discusses the degree to which Metropolitan Chicago Jewish adults feel and are satisfied with their connection to the Jewish community and the barriers they perceive to deeper community involvement.

Key findings

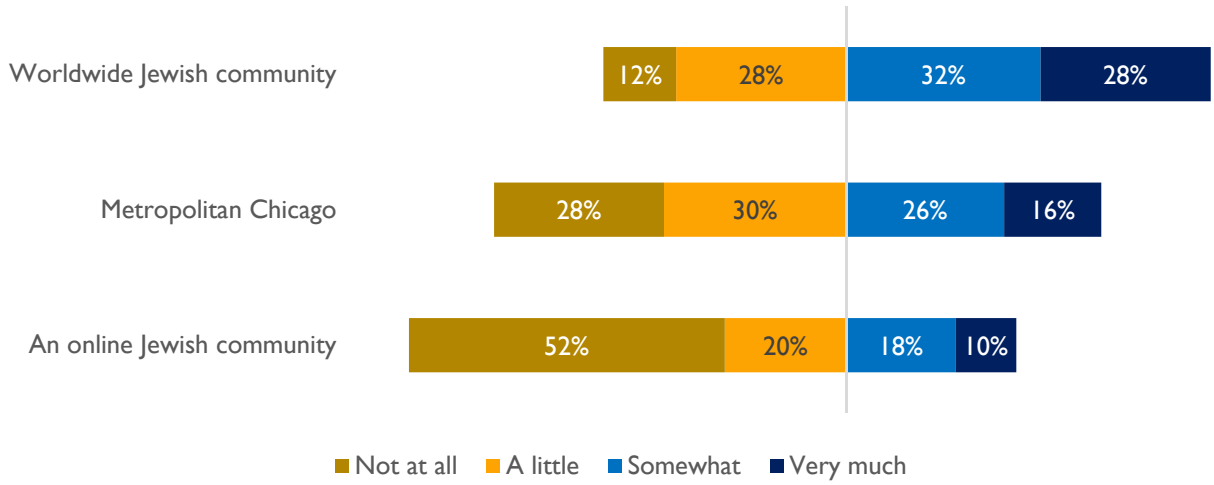
- Among Chicago Jewish adults, the majority indicated that they feel part of the worldwide and Metropolitan Chicago Jewish community but that their connections to the worldwide community are stronger. More than one quarter (28%) feel very much part of the worldwide Jewish community, and 32% feel somewhat part of it. In comparison, 16% feel very much part of the Metropolitan Chicago Jewish community, and 26% feel somewhat part of it.
- About one quarter of Jewish adults (24%) are very satisfied with their current level of connection to the Metropolitan Chicago Jewish community, 36% are somewhat satisfied, and 15% are not at all satisfied.
- Among Jewish adults who do not feel at all part of the Metropolitan Chicago Jewish community, more than one quarter (28%) feel very satisfied with their current level of connection and are not looking to be more connected. However, half of this group is not satisfied with their current level of connection. These individuals may be hoping to increase their connection.
- When asked about conditions that influence their level of level of connection to the local Jewish community, the three chosen most often were "don't know many people" (19%); "haven't found interesting Jewish activities" (18%); and the COVID-19 pandemic (18%). Among younger Jewish singles, 39% reported that not knowing many people limits their level of connection.
- Among those who feel very much part of the Chicago Jewish community, 76% indicated that most or all of their closest friends are Jewish. In contrast, among those who do not feel at all part of the Chicago Jewish community, 20% said most or all of the closest friends are Jewish.
- Jewish adults in Metropolitan Chicago are deeply concerned about antisemitism around the world and in the United States. The majority (69%) are very concerned about both. Seven percent of Jewish adults reported that they were personally a victim of antisemitism in the past year.

Feelings of connection to the Jewish community

Among Chicago Jewish adults, the majority indicated that they feel part of the worldwide and Metropolitan Chicago Jewish community but that connections to the worldwide community are stronger (Figure 8.1). More than one quarter (28%) feel very much part of the worldwide Jewish community, and 32% feel somewhat part of it. In comparison, 16% of Jewish adults feel very much part of the Metropolitan Chicago Jewish community, and 26% feel somewhat part of it. Just under

half of Jewish adults feel part of an online Jewish community, and 10% feel very much part of an online Jewish community.

Figure 8.1 Feeling part of the Jewish community



The degree to which Jewish adults feel part of the Jewish community varies by region, Jewish engagement, and lifestage (Table 8.1). For all groups, connections to the worldwide Jewish community are stronger than to the local Jewish community.

Table 8.1. Feeling part of Jewish community

	Feel part of worldwide Jewish community		Feel part of Metro Chicago Jewish community		Feel part of an online Jewish community	
	Any (%)	Very much (%)	Any (%)	Very much (%)	Any (%)	Very much (%)
All Jewish adults	88	28	72	16	48	10
Region						
City Far North	92	37	79	30	60	15
City North	84	28	69	15	45	9
City Other	88	26	70	11	46	10
Near North Suburbs	92	30	73	17	50	11
North Suburbs Cook	92	37	78	18	48	11
North Suburbs Lake	93	39	83	21	53	14
Near NW Suburbs	87	23	80	11	52	9
Far NW Suburbs	83	18	64	10	42	6
West Suburbs	83	18	62	6	43	6
South Suburbs	--	--	--	--	--	--
Jewish engagement						
Personal	72	12	45	3	18	1
Participant	88	17	70	7	30	3
Holiday	89	24	71	9	47	6
Communal	97	31	91	19	71	15
Immersed	99	61	94	41	79	26
Lifestage						
Parent Pre-K	80	34	76	30	55	9
Parent K-12	93	31	77	18	48	8
Couple 22-39	82	19	61	9	46	5
Couple 40-69	89	25	74	12	47	10
Couple 70+	88	30	76	17	48	13
Single 22-39	88	23	74	10	57	11
Single 40-69	86	28	63	10	41	9
Single 70+	89	36	80	17	52	13
Multigenerational	92	30	76	18	50	14
Financial situation						
Struggling	88	28	72	18	55	12
Enough	86	28	71	14	45	10
Extra	87	29	73	15	48	9
Well-off	91	28	77	18	46	9

Regardless of their current level of involvement in the Metropolitan Chicago Jewish community, Jewish adults vary in degree to which they are satisfied with their connection. About one quarter of Jewish adults (24%) are very satisfied, 36% are somewhat satisfied, and 15% are not at all satisfied (Table 8.2).

Satisfaction with connection to the Metropolitan Chicago Jewish community does not vary by region or lifestage but does vary by Jewish engagement group. Among Jewish adults in the Personal engagement group, one-in-five (21%) are not at all satisfied with their current level of connection to the community, but 30% are very satisfied. Among Jewish adults in the Immersed engagement group, 7% are not at all satisfied with their current level of connection to the community, but 27% are very satisfied. Respondents' financial status is also related to their satisfaction with the current level of connection to the Metropolitan Chicago Jewish community. Among those who describe themselves as well-off, 9% are not at all satisfied with their connection, and 33% are very satisfied. In contrast, among those who are financially struggling and those who have enough money, 19% of each group are not at all satisfied with their current level of connection to the community, and 19% of each group are very satisfied.

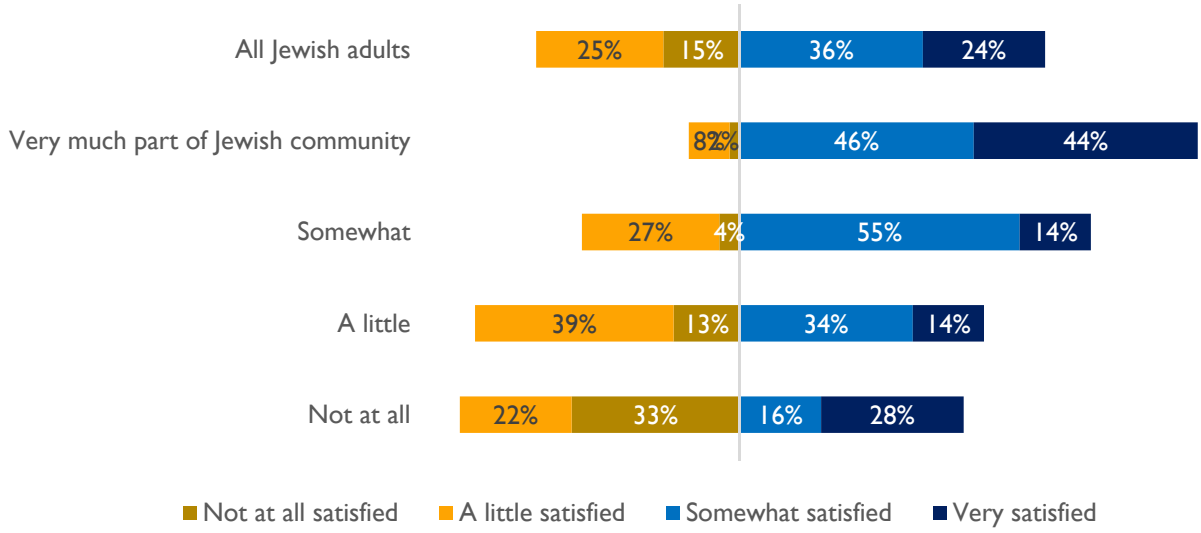
Table 8.2. Satisfaction with current level of connection to Metropolitan Chicago Jewish community

	Not at all satisfied (%)	A little satisfied (%)	Somewhat satisfied (%)	Very satisfied (%)
All Jewish adults	15	25	36	24
Region				
City Far North	11	24	37	27
City North	13	23	40	24
City Other	15	27	33	25
Near North Suburbs	13	28	37	22
North Suburbs Cook	11	28	38	22
North Suburbs Lake	12	22	40	27
Near NW Suburbs	16	29	39	16
Far NW Suburbs	17	36	30	18
West Suburbs	21	21	36	22
South Suburbs	--	--	--	--
Jewish engagement				
Personal	21	22	27	30
Participant	15	28	35	22
Holiday	21	32	34	13
Communal	7	30	46	18
Immersed	7	22	44	27
Lifestage				
Parent Pre-K	16	22	39	23
Parent K-12	13	28	41	18
Couple 22-39	11	32	34	23
Couple 40-69	12	27	37	25
Couple 70+	15	23	37	25
Single 22-39	13	29	38	20
Single 40-69	17	24	36	23
Single 70+	19	25	38	17
Multigenerational	15	27	35	23
Financial situation				
Struggling	19	31	32	19
Enough	19	27	35	19
Extra	10	25	39	26
Well-off	9	22	36	33

Among Jewish adults who do not feel at all part of the Metropolitan Chicago Jewish community, more than one quarter (28%) feel very satisfied with their current level of connection—that is, they are not looking to be more connected (Figure 8.2). However, 22% of these Jewish adults are not at all satisfied with their current level of connection and 33% are only a little satisfied, suggesting that they may be looking to strengthen that connection.

In contrast, among Jewish adults who feel very much part of the local Jewish community, nearly all are satisfied with their level of connection, with 46% feeling somewhat satisfied and 44% feeling very satisfied.

Figure 8.2. Satisfaction with connection to the Metropolitan Chicago Jewish community by feeling like part of community



Survey respondents who indicated that they are not very satisfied with their current level of connection were asked about conditions that influence their level of connection to the community (Table 8.3). Among all Jewish adults, the three responses chosen most often were "don't know many people," selected by 19%; "haven't found interesting Jewish activities," selected by 18%; and the pandemic, mentioned by 18%. The 13% of Jewish adults who selected something else provided a variety of responses, including not having enough time, not finding a good religious fit, travel or distance concerns, financial constraints, and dissatisfaction with organizations and leadership.[44]

Conditions that limit connection to the Metropolitan Chicago Jewish community vary by region, lifestage, Jewish engagement, and financial status (Table 8.4). For example, among younger singles, 39% reported that not knowing many people limits their level of connection. Jewish adults in the Personal, Participant, and Holiday engagement groups were more likely to identify their lack of confidence in their Jewish knowledge (17%, 13%, and 15% respectively), compared to those in the Communal and Immersed groups (9% and 5% respectively).

[44] None of these individual reasons was cited by more than 1% of respondents.

Table 8.3. Conditions that limit connection to Metropolitan Chicago Jewish community

	Don't know many people (%)	Haven't found interesting Jewish activities (%)	COVID-19 pandemic (%)	Not confident in my Jewish knowledge (%)	Feel unwelcome (%)	Political views are unwelcome (%)	Something else (%)
All Jewish adults	19	18	18	12	11	7	13
Region							
City Far North	18	13	24	16	13	12	16
City North	21	22	19	13	13	7	11
City Other	24	23	22	17	9	6	15
Near North Suburbs	22	24	20	11	16	8	13
North Suburbs Cook	17	20	17	8	4	14	12
North Suburbs Lake	11	15	19	7	8	5	9
Near NW Suburbs	17	20	24	9	7	5	10
Far NW Suburbs	25	26	18	12	8	6	17
West Suburbs	30	16	14	12	13	4	25
South Suburbs	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Jewish engagement							
Personal	23	20	9	17	10	3	10
Participant	21	23	17	13	11	6	13
Holiday	27	28	20	15	14	6	18
Communal	19	19	28	9	10	9	17
Immersed	13	13	27	5	9	13	13
Lifestage							
Parent Pre-K	22	15	31	17	7	5	14
Parent K-12	20	20	21	16	13	9	14
Couple 22-39	30	24	33	15	17	10	19
Couple 40-69	19	18	13	8	8	7	19
Couple 70+	13	18	19	8	5	7	11
Single 22-39	39	27	25	18	20	12	13
Single 40-69	18	18	15	12	11	6	10
Single 70+	19	22	30	13	6	2	14
Multigenerational	16	21	15	9	12	7	12
Financial situation							
Struggling	24	19	26	15	15	8	14
Enough	22	23	21	15	11	8	13
Extra	21	20	17	13	11	6	17
Well-off	14	16	16	7	8	6	10

Conditions that influence connection differ for Jewish adults based on their feeling of connection to the community as well as their satisfaction with that connection (Table 8.4). For Jewish adults who feel somewhat or very much part of the local Jewish community, the condition that most limits their involvement is the COVID-19 pandemic. For those who do not feel at all connected, not knowing many people is the most limiting factor.

Similarly, among Jewish adults who are not at all or a little satisfied with their current connection, more than one third of each group (36% of "not at all"; 35% of "a little") indicated that not knowing many people influences their level of connection. In contrast, among those who are somewhat satisfied, the COVID-19 pandemic was cited most often (26% of "somewhat satisfied") as the condition that limits their connection.

Table 8.4. Conditions that influence level of connection to Metropolitan Chicago Jewish community, by satisfaction and connection

	Don't know many people (%)	Haven't found interesting Jewish activities (%)	COVID-19 pandemic (%)	Not confident in my Jewish knowledge (%)	Feel unwelcome (%)	Political views are unwelcome (%)	Something else (%)
All Jewish adults	19	18	18	12	11	7	13
Feel part of Metropolitan Chicago Jewish community							
Not at all part	29	21	12	15	14	6	17
A little	26	27	21	16	13	9	15
Somewhat	16	20	25	9	9	8	14
Very much	5	7	20	4	3	6	6
Satisfied with connection to Metropolitan Chicago Jewish community							
Not at all satisfied	36	27	22	22	24	11	22
A little	35	34	27	17	14	10	19
Somewhat	17	20	26	13	10	9	16
Very much	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

To illustrate the experiences of respondents who perceive barriers to their participation in Jewish life, a few examples are included below. More details are provided in the final chapter of this report.

> *While I was raised Jewish, I don't always remember a lot of the Jewish stories and customs. I don't know many Jewish people, and the ones I do know, I have trouble making a connection with outside of religion.*

> *It's a pleasant surprise when accessibility isn't an issue at in-person events. I've only been seriously observant as an adult, so I always feel off-kilter because of my less extensive Jewish knowledge, and it's stressful to not know how someone perceives my queerness in Jewish settings.*

> *Since I'm a student, I don't have a lot of money to pay for dues or anything like that, so I don't belong to a temple. However, I'm a graduate student, so I'm also older than undergrads and don't feel like I fit in at mostly undergraduate Hillel events on campus. So I haven't really found a permanent place in the Jewish community yet.*

We feel more to the right politically than most people in this area. We don't identify with the social justice language that seems so integral.

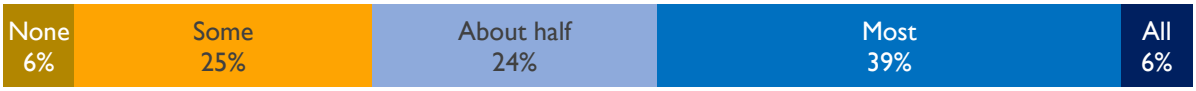
As a progressive person, my views are sometimes unpopular.

I do strongly identify with being Jewish culturally, but am not religious, so I find it difficult to find the right community to connect with others who are similar. I also am not married to a Jewish person (he's an atheist who doesn't care about any of it), so I don't have a partner to seek out the community with me.

Jewish friends

Almost all Jewish adults in Metropolitan Chicago reported having at least some close Jewish friends (Figure 8.3). Six percent said that all of their closest friends are Jewish, and another 6% indicated that none of their closest friends are Jewish. Among all US Jews, 5% say that all their close friends are Jewish, and 44% say that most of their close friends are Jewish.[45]

Figure 8.3. Closest friends are Jewish



Combining the two highest categories, "most" and "all" (Table 8.5), Jewish adults in City Other and the West Suburbs have fewer Jewish friends than those in other regions. In City Other, 22% of Jewish adults indicated that most or all of their close friends are Jewish, and in the West Suburbs, 14% of Jewish adults stated that most or all of their close friends are Jewish. Jewish adults in the Immersed engagement group have more Jewish friends than other engagement groups. Seventy-one percent of Jewish adults in the Immersed group say that most or all of their close friends are Jewish, compared to 22% in the Personal group.

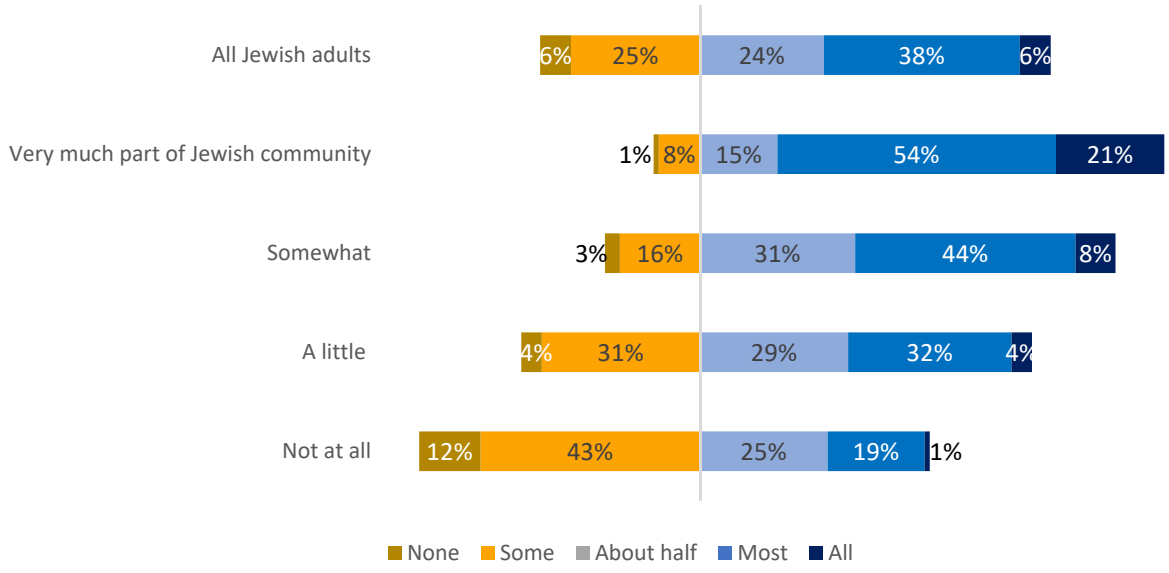
[45] Pew Research Center, 2021.

Table 8.5. Close Jewish friends

	None (%)	Some or about half (%)	Most or all (%)
All Jewish adults	6	50	44
Region			
City Far North	4	49	47
City North	4	62	34
City Other	6	72	22
Near North Suburbs	4	41	55
North Suburbs Cook	2	36	62
North Suburbs Lake	1	39	59
Near NW Suburbs	8	35	56
Far NW Suburbs	9	61	30
West Suburbs	7	79	14
South Suburbs	--	--	--
Jewish engagement			
Personal	12	66	22
Participant	4	64	32
Holiday	5	54	41
Communal	2	51	47
Immersed	2	27	71
Lifestage			
Parent Pre-K	9	44	47
Parent K-12	3	53	44
Couple 22-39	3	72	25
Couple 40-69	6	53	41
Couple 70+	2	33	66
Single 22-39	6	74	20
Single 40-69	8	58	34
Single 70+	5	36	59
Multigenerational	5	55	40
Financial situation			
Struggling	8	52	40
Enough	5	51	45
Extra	7	54	39
Well-off	2	56	41

Having close Jewish friends is strongly related to feeling part of the Metropolitan Chicago Jewish community. Among those Jewish adults who feel very much part of the Chicago Jewish community, three quarters have mostly Jewish close friends, including 54% who indicated most of their close friends are Jewish, and 21% who said all of their closest friends are Jewish (Figure 8.4). In contrast, among those Jewish adults who do not feel at all part of the Chicago Jewish community, 20% said most or all of the closest friends are Jewish.

Figure 8.4. Close Jewish friends by feeling like part of the Metropolitan Chicago Jewish community



Concerns about antisemitism and current events

Jewish adults in Metropolitan Chicago are deeply concerned about antisemitism around the world and in the United States. The majority of Jewish adults (69%) are very concerned about both (Table 8.6).

Among US Jews, 45% say there is "a lot" of antisemitism in the United States and more than nine-in-ten say there is at least "some" antisemitism. Six percent say there is not much antisemitism, and fewer than 1% say there is none at all.[46]

Seven percent of Jewish adults reported that they were personally a victim of antisemitism in the past year. Jewish adults in the Immersed engagement group reported being a victim of antisemitism at a higher rate (13%), compared to all other engagement groups. A larger share of Jewish adults in City Other were victims of antisemitism (13%), compared to any other region. Among those who had been a victim of antisemitism, concern about antisemitism is higher, with 87% very concerned about worldwide antisemitism, and 84% very concerned about antisemitism in the United States. In comparison, among those who had not personally experienced antisemitism, 68% are very concerned about worldwide and US antisemitism.

[46] Pew Research Center, 2021.

Table 8.6. Antisemitism

	Very concerned about antisemitism around the world (%)	Very concerned about antisemitism in the US (%)	Personally been a victim of antisemitism in past year (%)
All Jewish adults	69	69	7
Region			
City Far North	60	58	10
City North	68	68	5
City Other	59	58	13
Near North Suburbs	71	70	9
North Suburbs Cook	79	78	10
North Suburbs Lake	75	79	6
Near NW Suburbs	76	71	3
Far NW Suburbs	73	72	7
West Suburbs	66	70	5
South Suburbs	--	--	--
Jewish engagement			
Personal	60	60	3
Participant	71	73	9
Holiday	71	70	9
Communal	73	73	6
Immersed	76	71	13
Lifestage			
Parent Pre-K	52	52	5
Parent K-12	69	67	7
Couple 22-39	51	56	3
Couple 40-69	74	75	9
Couple 70+	82	80	4
Single 22-39	46	46	6
Single 40-69	70	71	13
Single 70+	85	83	4
Multigenerational	77	75	11
Financial situation			
Struggling	69	67	11
Enough	71	69	8
Extra	67	68	5
Well-off	68	68	5
Personally been a victim of antisemitism in past year			
No	68	68	n/a
Yes	87	84	n/a

The 7% of Jewish adults who reported they had personally been victims of antisemitism in the past year had the opportunity to describe the incidents. Details provided by 239 respondents are categorized in Table 8.7. Another 66 respondents referred to events that were not specific, were not

directed at the respondent personally, or took place more than a year ago, and so could not be classified in this table.

Thirty-eight respondents described mild experiences of antisemitism. These incidents were primarily hearing hurtful "jokes" and other generally negative comments. One person shared that "many people here use the descriptor 'Jewish woman' to mean a very specific thing—wealthy, wearing a lot of jewels, loud, brash, pushy."

Another 77 incidents were moderate in nature, meaning the respondent felt the experiences were serious but not especially traumatic. Respondents described being discriminated again and/or the target of slurs and particularly cruel speech. For example, one respondent shared they were mocked by their employer for taking time off for Jewish holidays.

Intense experiences of antisemitism were shared by 34 respondents. These were cases of assault or vandalism, as well as bullying. One person described being verbally harassed by people at a gas station after they saw a bumper sticker in Hebrew: "They pulled up behind me and started yelling things at me like 'dirty Jew,' 'you're a Zionist murderer,' and 'you kill babies.'"

Table 8.7. Personal experiences of antisemitism within the past year

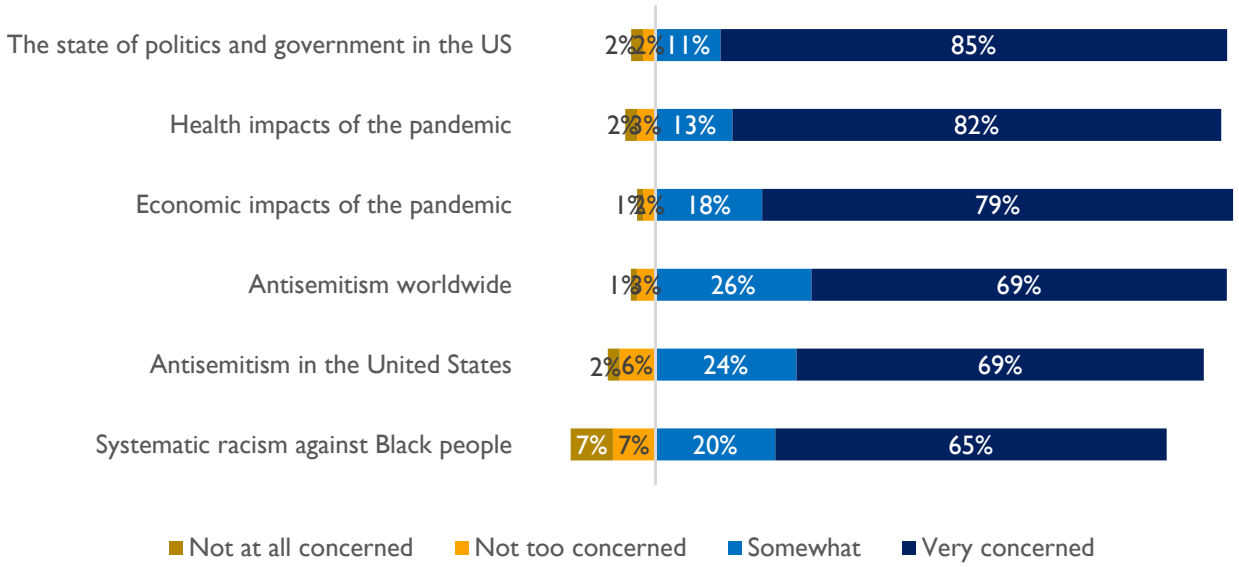
	Number of respondents (unweighted n)
Intensity	
Mild	38
Moderate	77
Intense	34
Could not be classified	90
Content	
Slurs and "jokes"	73
Generic negative	37
Stereotypes (e.g., appearance, money)	31
Discrimination for religious or ethnic reasons	25
Politics about the US or Israel (including BDS)	20
Other	91
Format	
Verbal (direct)	83
Verbal (indirect)	50
Harassment or assault	26
Other	12
Setting	
Work or school	61
In public	45
Online	22
Other	36

Concern over recent events

The survey of Jewish households in Metropolitan Chicago took place during an especially politically charged period. The presidential election loomed, the pandemic disrupted work and home life, and the Black Lives Matter movement dominated local and national media. As noted above, Jewish adults express strong concerns about antisemitism. Yet, the survey results indicate they were even more concerned about the state of politics and government in the United States, the health and economic impacts of the pandemic, and systematic racism against Black people.

Eighty-five percent of Jewish adults were very concerned about politics and the government, 82% were very concerned about the health impacts of the pandemic, and 79% were very concerned about the economic impacts of the pandemic. Sixty-five percent were very concerned about systematic racism against Black people (Figure 8.5).

Figure 8.5. Concern about recent events



The level of concern about these issues differs by region, lifestage, Jewish engagement, and financial situation (Table 8.8). However, the relative order of what they are concerned about from most to least is consistent for most groups. A noteworthy exception is that older people are more concerned about antisemitism than racism; younger Jewish adults are more concerned about racism. Eighty-three percent of single Jewish adults ages 70 or older are very concerned about antisemitism in the United States, and 72% are very concerned about systematic racism against Black people. Among single Jewish adults ages 22-39, 46% are very concerned about antisemitism in the United States, and 78% are very concerned about systematic racism against Black people.

Table 8.8. Very concerned about recent events

	The state of politics and government in the US (%)	Health impacts of the pandemic (%)	Economic impacts of the pandemic (%)	Antisemitism around the world (%)	Antisemitism in the US (%)	Systematic racism against Black people (%)
All Jewish adults	85	82	79	69	69	65
Region						
City Far North	79	74	72	60	58	60
City North	89	84	80	68	68	75
City Other	85	86	73	59	58	78
Near North Suburbs	91	85	77	71	70	66
North Suburbs Cook	87	78	82	79	78	59
North Suburbs Lake	92	85	83	75	79	66
Near NW Suburbs	81	78	76	76	71	59
Far NW Suburbs	82	77	71	73	72	62
West Suburbs	83	82	81	66	70	62
South Suburbs	--	--	--	--	--	--
Jewish engagement						
Personal	85	85	81	60	60	68
Participant	87	84	77	71	73	72
Holiday	85	79	75	71	70	62
Communal	91	84	78	73	73	73
Immersed	81	72	74	76	71	54
Lifestage						
Parent Pre-K	68	69	66	52	52	57
Parent K-12	79	72	73	69	67	57
Couple 22-39	87	86	74	51	56	78
Couple 40-69	91	83	80	74	75	66
Couple 70+	90	88	87	82	80	66
Single 22-39	83	80	71	46	46	78
Single 40-69	90	85	79	70	71	62
Single 70+	90	87	84	85	83	72
Multigenerational	89	84	77	77	75	69
Financial situation						
Struggling	81	81	77	69	67	62
Enough	85	80	77	71	69	65
Extra	89	85	80	67	68	70
Well-off	91	85	76	68	68	72

CHAPTER 9. ISRAEL

Israel plays a central role in the Jewish identity of many Metropolitan Chicago Jewish adults. This chapter measures connection to Israel by frequency of travel to Israel and Israel-related news consumption. It also assesses feelings of attachment to Israel and other views about Israel, and the extent to which these views are shared by community members.

Key findings

- The majority of Jewish adults in Metropolitan Chicago (60%) have traveled to Israel. This share represents an increase from 2010 when 50% of Jewish adults had traveled to Israel. The share of Metropolitan Chicago Jews who have traveled to Israel is substantially higher than among US Jews in general, of whom only 45% have traveled to Israel.
- The majority of Jewish adults are emotionally attached to Israel, with 31% feeling very attached and 35% feeling somewhat attached. Taken together, the proportion who are attached (66%) is slightly higher than among all US Jewish adults (58%).
- The majority of respondents agree that it is important for Israel to exist as a democratic state (90%) and as a Jewish state (80%) and feel proud of Israel's accomplishments (82%). Three quarters of Jewish adults (75%) believe that caring about Israel is essential to Jewish identity.
- Nearly three quarters of Jewish adults (73%) believe American Jews have the right to criticize the Israeli government. A little more than half of Jewish adults (55%) believe Israel lives up to its human rights values, and 40% self-identify as a Zionist.
- In the past year, 12% of Jewish households donated to an Israel-related cause, with 4% reporting it was their top cause.

Travel to Israel

The majority of Metropolitan Chicago Jewish adults have been to Israel: 25% have been there once; 29% have traveled to Israel multiple times; and 6% have lived in Israel (Table 9.1). In total, 60% of Jewish adults have been to Israel. This share represents an increase from 2010, when 50% of Metropolitan Chicago Jewish adults had been to Israel. The share of Metropolitan Chicago Jews who have traveled to Israel is substantially higher than among US Jews in general, of whom only 45% of whom traveled to Israel.[47]

Israel travel is associated with patterns of Jewish engagement. Among Jewish adults in the Immersed engagement group, nearly all (90%) have been to Israel, followed by those in the Communal group (73%). The Personal group has the lowest share of Israel travel, with the majority (64%) reporting they have never been to Israel.

[47] Pew Research Center, 2021.

Table 9.1. Frequency of trips to Israel

	Never (%)	Once (%)	Multiple times (%)	Lived there (%)
All Jewish adults	39	25	29	6
Region				
City Far North	24	23	39	13
City North	33	29	29	10
City Other	38	33	24	4
Near North Suburbs	32	22	35	10
North Suburbs Cook	29	31	34	6
North Suburbs Lake	37	23	35	5
Near NW Suburbs	44	25	25	6
Far NW Suburbs	52	23	22	3
West Suburbs	65	16	17	1
South Suburbs	--	--	--	--
Jewish engagement				
Personal	64	20	12	4
Participant	46	29	21	4
Holiday	38	34	23	5
Communal	27	31	37	5
Immersed	10	18	55	18
Lifestage				
Parent Pre-K	37	19	30	14
Parent K-12	37	23	30	10
Couple 22-39	23	45	27	6
Couple 40-69	46	23	26	4
Couple 70+	32	24	41	2
Single 22-39	28	34	27	11
Single 40-69	53	20	22	6
Single 70+	32	34	31	3
Multigenerational	37	24	30	9
Financial situation				
Struggling	48	18	21	13
Enough	39	27	29	5
Extra	35	27	30	7
Well-off	28	31	37	4
Attachment to Israel				
Not at all attached	75	17	7	< 1
Not too attached	58	29	12	1
Somewhat attached	34	34	29	4
Very attached	11	20	52	18

Types of Israel travel

Eighteen percent of Jewish adults have traveled to Israel with a Jewish organization on a sponsored trip and 11% have gone on an educational or volunteer program (Table 9.2). Thirty-two percent of age-eligible adults—those younger than age 47—have traveled to Israel with Birthright Israel.

Small shares of teens and young adults have also participated in other types of Israel trips. Among Jewish children ages 12 and older, 6% have traveled with Ta'am Yisrael,[48] and 7% have traveled on some other organized trip (not shown in table). In total, 4% of households include a member (including children and young adults) who ever participated in Ta'am Yisrael.

[48] Now called IsraelNow, https://www.israelnowtrip.com/

Table 9.2. Types of Israel travel

	Birthright Israel (age-eligible) (%)	Sponsored by Jewish organization (%)	Educational program or volunteer trip (%)	Long-term program (%)	Business trip (%)	Honeymoon Israel (age-eligible) (%)
All Jewish adults	32	18	11	10	5	2
Region						
City Far North	32	15	19	22	6	3
City North	42	23	16	14	5	1
City Other	43	14	8	8	4	4
Near North Suburbs	36	17	10	10	7	5
North Suburbs Cook	43	24	9	6	4	< 1
North Suburbs Lake	35	23	16	9	5	1
Near NW Suburbs	--	22	7	6	2	--
Far NW Suburbs	--	9	4	3	5	--
West Suburbs	--	6	5	6	3	--
South Suburbs	--	--	--	--	--	--
Jewish engagement						
Personal	25	6	3	3	3	0
Participant	57	12	5	3	1	4
Holiday	34	14	6	6	3	< 1
Communal	44	26	14	11	4	4
Immersed	30	31	28	26	11	5
Lifestage						
Parent Pre-K	27	14	17	19	4	3
Parent K-12	11	19	18	17	5	1
Couple 22-39	56	15	11	11	1	4
Couple 40-69	--	18	9	8	4	--
Couple 70+	n/a	22	7	4	8	n/a
Single 22-39	48	16	13	13	1	n/a
Single 40-69	--	16	9	5	2	n/a
Single 70+	n/a	19	8	5	2	n/a
Multigenerational	--	19	11	10	7	--
Financial situation						
Struggling	13	14	11	10	4	2
Enough	33	16	10	8	4	1
Extra	44	18	12	12	5	4
Well-off	55	25	13	11	5	3
Very attached	36	30	22	21	8	5

Of Jewish adults who have only been to Israel once, 67% of those under age 47 have participated in a Birthright Israel trip and 20% have traveled with another Jewish organization (Table 9.3).

Table 9.3. Types of Israel travel by Israel attachment and number of trips

	Birthright (age-eligible) (%)	Sponsored by Jewish organization (%)	Educational program or volunteer trip (%)	Long-term program (%)	Business trip (%)	Honeymoon Israel (age-eligible) (%)
All Jewish adults	32	18	11	10	5	2
Travel to Israel						
Never	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Once	67	20	5	4	2	1
Multiple times	49	37	26	21	11	6
Lived there	26	24	33	42	13	2
Attachment to Israel	*	*	*	*	*	*
Not at all attached	19	3	2	2	1	0
Not too attached	36	8	5	3	4	< 1
Somewhat attached	47	19	9	7	3	3
Very attached	36	30	22	21	8	5

Emotional attachment to Israel

Among Jewish adults, the majority are emotionally attached to Israel, with 35% feeling somewhat attached, and 31% feeling very attached (Table 9.4). Taken together, the proportion who are attached to Israel (66%) is higher than among all US Jewish adults (58%).[49] Attachment to Israel is highest among Jewish adults who have been to Israel multiple times (56% very attached) or lived there (78% very attached). The level of attachment to Israel has declined somewhat since 2010, when 36% of Jewish adults were somewhat attached, and 41% were very attached.[50]

Travel and emotional connection to Israel are deeply linked. Jewish adults who have travelled to Israel have stronger attachments to it. Among those who have never been to Israel, 29% are not at all attached. Among those who have been to Israel multiple times, 56% are very attached.

[49] Pew Research Center, 2021.

[50] Ukeles, J.B., Miller, R., Friedman, P., & Dutwin, D. (2010). *Metropolitan Chicago Jewish Community Study: Initial Highlights* [PowerPoint slides]. Question wording was slightly different: "emotional connection" rather than "emotional attachment."

Table 9.4. Emotional attachment to Israel

	Not at all attached (%)	Not too attached (%)	Somewhat attached (%)	Very attached (%)
All Jewish adults	14	20	35	31
Region				
City Far North	13	15	25	47
City North	20	20	34	27
City Other	22	25	36	17
Near North Suburbs	13	21	30	37
North Suburbs Cook	9	17	39	36
North Suburbs Lake	9	17	38	36
Near NW Suburbs	10	19	32	39
Far NW Suburbs	13	27	35	25
West Suburbs	14	26	41	19
South Suburbs	--	--	--	--
Jewish engagement				
Personal	32	27	30	11
Participant	14	24	42	19
Holiday	9	26	36	30
Communal	6	20	46	28
Immersed	4	5	18	74
Lifestage				
Parent Pre-K	13	27	28	31
Parent K-12	12	20	28	40
Couple 22-39	27	18	36	19
Couple 40-69	14	24	36	26
Couple 70+	10	16	41	34
Single 22-39	16	29	35	19
Single 40-69	17	22	31	30
Single 70+	13	18	37	32
Multigenerational	12	16	33	39
Financial situation				
Struggling	13	21	29	37
Enough	15	21	34	30
Extra	15	20	38	27
Well-off	16	21	33	30
Travel to Israel				
Never	29	31	31	9
Once	9	23	44	24
Multiple times	3	9	33	56
Lived there	1	2	19	78

News about Israel

The majority of Jewish adults sought out news about Israel in the past year, with 35% seeking out news sometimes, and 25% seeking out news frequently (Table 9.5). Interest in news about Israel was highest among Jewish adults in the Immersed group, among whom 75% sought out Israel news frequently. Those who were in Israel more frequently, either on multiple trips or by living there, sought out news more often than those who had never visited or visited only once (Table 9.6). Among Jewish adults who felt very attached to Israel, over half (59%) sought out Israel news frequently.

Table 9.5. Frequency of seeking news about Israel, past year

	Never (%)	Rarely (%)	Sometimes (%)	Frequently (%)
All Jewish adults	17	23	35	25
Region				
City Far North	9	20	39	32
City North	16	25	36	23
City Other	21	30	33	15
Near North Suburbs	14	26	30	31
North Suburbs Cook	12	18	40	29
North Suburbs Lake	9	20	42	29
Near NW Suburbs	21	18	31	30
Far NW Suburbs	23	20	35	21
West Suburbs	27	28	29	16
South Suburbs	18	34	30	18
Jewish engagement				
Personal	35	31	28	6
Participant	16	25	43	16
Holiday	16	23	39	23
Communal	8	32	50	10
Immersed	2	4	19	75
Lifestage				
Parent Pre-K	30	21	28	21
Parent K-12	15	19	33	33
Couple 22-39	21	36	35	8
Couple 40-69	15	26	34	25
Couple 70+	15	18	39	29
Single 22-39	9	37	35	19
Single 40-69	20	21	35	24
Single 70+	13	21	40	26
Multigenerational	13	22	36	29
Financial situation				
Struggling	19	23	31	27
Enough	15	24	35	25
Extra	17	27	36	20
Well-off	14	22	35	29

Table 9.6. Frequency of seeking news about Israel, past year, by attachment and travel

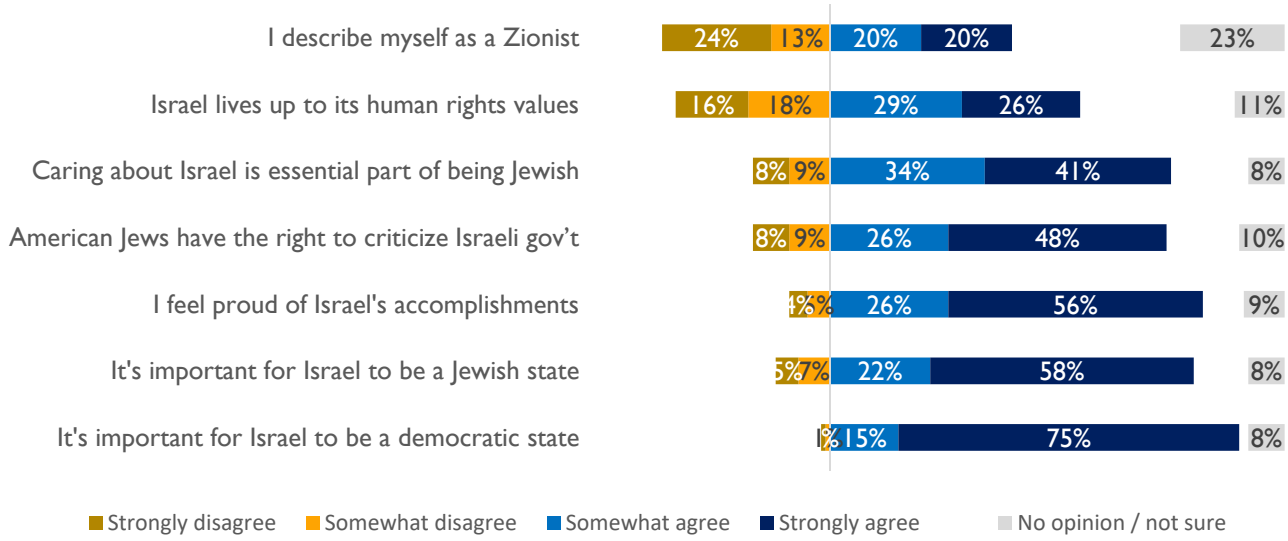
	Never (%)	Rarely (%)	Sometimes (%)	Frequently (%)
All Jewish adults	17	23	35	25
Travel to Israel				
Never	30	29	32	9
Once	12	28	41	18
Multiple times	5	15	36	44
Lived there	4	6	23	66
Attachment to Israel				
Not at all attached	47	32	16	5
Not too attached	27	39	30	4
Somewhat attached	9	25	50	16
Very attached	2	7	32	59

Attitudes toward Israel

Respondents were asked if they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements about Israel (Figure 9.1). The majority of respondents agree that it is important for Israel to exist as a democratic state (90% including 75% strongly agree, 22% somewhat agree) and as a Jewish state (80% including 58% strongly agree, 22% somewhat agree) and feel proud of Israel's accomplishments (82% including 58% strongly agree, 22% somewhat agree). Three quarters of Jewish adults (75%) believe that caring about Israel is essential to Jewish identity.

Nearly three quarters (73%) of Jewish adults believe American Jews have the right to criticize the Israeli government. A little more than half of Jewish adults (55%) believe Israel lives up to its human rights values, and 40% self-identify as a Zionist.

Figure 9.1. Agreement and disagreement with statements about Israel



There are significant differences in views about Israel by region and Jewish engagement (Table 9.7a and 9.7b). For example, 74% of Jewish adults in City Far North agree that "caring about Israel is an essential part of being Jewish," compared to 66% in City North and 57% in City Other. Among Jewish adults in the Immersed group, 88% agree that "caring about Israel is an essential part of being Jewish," compared to 56% in the Personal group.

Table 9.7a. Agreement with statements about Israel (% who strongly or somewhat agree)

	It's important for Israel to be a democratic state (%)	Feel proud of Israel's accomplishments (%)	It's important for Israel to be a Jewish state (%)	Caring about Israel is essential part of being Jewish (%)
All Jewish adults	90	82	80	75
Region				
City Far North	89	78	73	74
City North	93	75	74	66
City Other	83	65	59	57
Near North Suburbs	94	80	82	76
North Suburbs Cook	96	90	91	80
North Suburbs Lake	96	92	89	81
Near NW Suburbs	88	89	89	84
Far NW Suburbs	93	91	92	78
West Suburbs	83	71	71	70
South Suburbs	--	--	--	--
Jewish engagement				
Personal	85	64	62	56
Participant	94	81	79	68
Holiday	88	83	82	78
Communal	94	97	87	79
Immersed	95	92	90	88
Lifestage				
Parent Pre-K	78	67	64	70
Parent K-12	93	83	86	80
Couple 22-39	86	66	56	60
Couple 40-69	96	86	83	77
Couple 70+	97	93	88	80
Single 22-39	83	60	57	45
Single 40-69	87	81	83	72
Single 70+	96	94	92	81
Multigenerational	92	80	83	74
Financial situation				
Struggling	82	71	75	72
Enough	92	84	82	78
Extra	95	82	78	70
Well-off	94	81	79	71

Table 9.7b. Agreement with statements about Israel (% who strongly or somewhat agree)

	American Jews have the right to criticize Israeli gov't (%)	Israel lives up to its human rights values (%)	I describe myself as a Zionist (%)
All Jewish adults	73	55	40
Region			
City Far North	75	53	46
City North	83	42	42
City Other	83	35	32
Near North Suburbs	70	54	44
North Suburbs Cook	73	65	42
North Suburbs Lake	73	64	48
Near NW Suburbs	65	67	44
Far NW Suburbs	76	67	36
West Suburbs	71	46	28
South Suburbs	--	--	--
Jewish engagement			
Personal	73	39	21
Participant	79	43	25
Holiday	70	58	38
Communal	79	55	47
Immersed	73	73	74
Lifestage			
Parent Pre-K	66	49	38
Parent K-12	73	60	45
Couple 22-39	81	33	38
Couple 40-69	77	56	40
Couple 70+	77	63	41
Single 22-39	76	34	38
Single 40-69	73	53	35
Single 70+	76	59	38
Multigenerational	74	55	48
Financial situation			
Struggling	66	57	43
Enough	73	58	39
Extra	79	51	40
Well-off	85	46	44

Respondents' attitudes toward Israel are also related to the strength of their emotional attachment to Israel (Table 9.8a and 9.8b). Those who feel very attached to Israel strongly agree that caring about Israel is essential to being Jewish (74%), are very proud of its accomplishments (84%), and think it is important for Israel to be a Jewish state (88%) and a democratic state (83%). Of those who feel very attached to Israel, just over half (53%) strongly agree that they describe themselves as a Zionist.

Among those who are not at all attached to Israel, responses to attitudinal questions are generally less supportive of Israel than for those who are more attached. For those who are not at all attached to Israel, 23% strongly disagree that they feel proud of Israel's accomplishments, compared to less than 1% of those who are very attached. A larger share of the unattached (28%), however, have no opinion on this topic or are not sure whether they feel proud of Israel's accomplishments.

Table 9.8a. Statements about Israel, by attachment to Israel

	Not at all attached to Israel (%)	Not too attached (%)	Somewhat attached (%)	Very attached to Israel (%)
All Jewish adults	14	20	35	31
Caring about Israel is essential part of being Jewish				
Strongly agree	3	11	38	74
Somewhat agree	19	45	45	22
Somewhat disagree	17	19	9	3
Strongly disagree	37	12	3	1
No opinion or not sure	23	13	5	1
Total	100	100	100	100
Feel proud of Israel's accomplishments				
Strongly agree	5	26	62	84
Somewhat agree	31	43	29	12
Somewhat disagree	12	11	3	2
Strongly disagree	23	4	1	< 1
No opinion or not sure	28	15	4	1
Total	100	100	100	100
It's important for Israel to be a Jewish state				
Strongly agree	8	30	63	88
Somewhat agree	24	38	26	9
Somewhat disagree	14	14	6	1
Strongly disagree	28	4	1	< 1
No opinion or not sure	25	14	4	2
Total	100	100	100	100
It's important for Israel to be a democratic state				
Strongly agree	55	66	82	83
Somewhat agree	21	21	12	14
Somewhat disagree	< 1	< 1	2	1
Strongly disagree	2	1	1	< 1
No opinion or not sure	21	12	4	2
Total	100	100	100	100

Table 9.8b. Statements about Israel, by attachment to Israel

	Not at all attached to Israel (%)	Not too attached (%)	Somewhat attached (%)	Very attached to Israel (%)
All Jewish adults	14	20	35	31
American Jews have the right to criticize Israeli gov't				
Strongly agree	65	51	48	42
Somewhat agree	10	23	29	30
Somewhat disagree	4	7	8	13
Strongly disagree	3	6	7	10
No opinion or not sure	17	13	7	4
Total	100	100	100	100
Israel lives up to its human rights values				
Strongly agree	5	11	23	41
Somewhat agree	8	23	36	36
Somewhat disagree	17	27	22	12
Strongly disagree	46	22	10	7
No opinion or not sure	24	16	8	3
Total	100	100	100	100
I describe myself as a Zionist				
Strongly agree	< 1	1	9	53
Somewhat agree	2	12	30	25
Somewhat disagree	7	13	17	7
Strongly disagree	64	38	18	6
No opinion or not sure	27	36	26	9
Total	100	100	100	100

Travel to Israel is also related to respondents' attitudes toward Israel (Table 9.9a and 9.9b). The majority of Jewish adults who traveled multiple times to Israel strongly agree (55%) that caring about Israel is an essential part of being Jewish, and 71% of those individuals feel very proud of Israel's accomplishments.

Table 9.9a. Statements about Israel, by travel to Israel

	Never been to Israel (%)	Once (%)	Multiple times (%)	Lived in Israel (%)
All Jewish adults	39	25	29	6
Caring about Israel is essential part of being Jewish				
Strongly agree	24	37	55	58
Somewhat agree	36	39	30	26
Somewhat disagree	13	9	7	7
Strongly disagree	11	10	5	5
No opinion or not sure	15	5	3	3
Total	100	100	100	100
Feel proud of Israel's accomplishments				
Strongly agree	37	57	71	52
Somewhat agree	31	27	21	30
Somewhat disagree	6	7	3	14
Strongly disagree	8	3	2	2
No opinion or not sure	18	5	2	2
Total	100	100	100	100
It's important for Israel to be a Jewish state				
Strongly agree	42	57	72	68
Somewhat agree	26	25	17	20
Somewhat disagree	8	8	6	5
Strongly disagree	8	5	3	2
No opinion or not sure	16	5	2	5
Total	100	100	100	100
It's important for Israel to be a democratic state				
Strongly agree	65	80	83	78
Somewhat agree	18	14	13	17
Somewhat disagree	1	1	1	1
Strongly disagree	1	< 1	< 1	2
No opinion or not sure	15	4	2	1
Total	100	100	100	100

Table 9.9b. Statements about Israel, by travel to Israel

	Never been to Israel (%)	Once (%)	Multiple times (%)	Lived in Israel (%)
All Jewish adults	39	25	29	6
American Jews have the right to criticize Israeli gov't				
Strongly agree	50	52	47	43
Somewhat agree	21	27	28	33
Somewhat disagree	7	10	11	9
Strongly disagree	6	5	9	13
No opinion or not sure	16	6	5	2
Total	100	100	100	100
Israel lives up to its human rights values				
Strongly agree	19	20	33	27
Somewhat agree	23	34	33	33
Somewhat disagree	21	21	16	14
Strongly disagree	17	18	13	25
No opinion or not sure	20	7	5	2
Total	100	100	100	100
I describe myself as a Zionist				
Strongly agree	6	14	36	52
Somewhat agree	14	24	27	25
Somewhat disagree	10	15	13	5
Strongly disagree	36	25	14	13
No opinion or not sure	34	22	12	5
Total	100	100	100	100

Organizations and Israel

In the past year, 12% of Jewish households donated to an Israel-related cause, with 4% reporting this category as one of their top causes (Table 9.10).

Table 9.10. Donations to Israel-related causes, past year

	Donated to Israel-related cause (%)	Israel-related cause is top cause (%)
All Jewish households	12	4
Region		
City Far North	13	3
City North	12	4
City Other	8	3
Near North Suburbs	16	6
North Suburbs Cook	19	7
North Suburbs Lake	16	6
Near NW Suburbs	14	4
Far NW Suburbs	9	4
West Suburbs	6	1
South Suburbs	--	--
Jewish engagement		
Personal	2	< 1
Participant	7	3
Holiday	10	5
Communal	15	4
Immersed	41	15
Lifestage		
Parent Pre-K	8	2
Parent K-12	11	4
Couple 22-39	5	1
Couple 40-69	13	4
Couple 70+	22	10
Single 22-39	6	2
Single 40-69	13	5
Single 70+	19	6
Multigenerational	12	4
Financial situation		
Struggling	8	3
Enough	12	5
Extra	11	3
Well-off	19	6
Travel to Israel		
Never	4	1
Once	11	3
Multiple times	27	10
Lived there	25	10
Connection to Israel		
Not at all connected	< 1	0
Not too connected	2	1
Somewhat connected	11	3
Very connected	34	13

CHAPTER 10. FINANCIAL WELL-BEING AND ECONOMIC INSECURITY

Jewish organizations are concerned about the financial well-being of the community, and this is particularly true as households cope with the COVID-19 pandemic. This chapter explores the financial needs of community members with a focus on households who are economically insecure.

Key findings

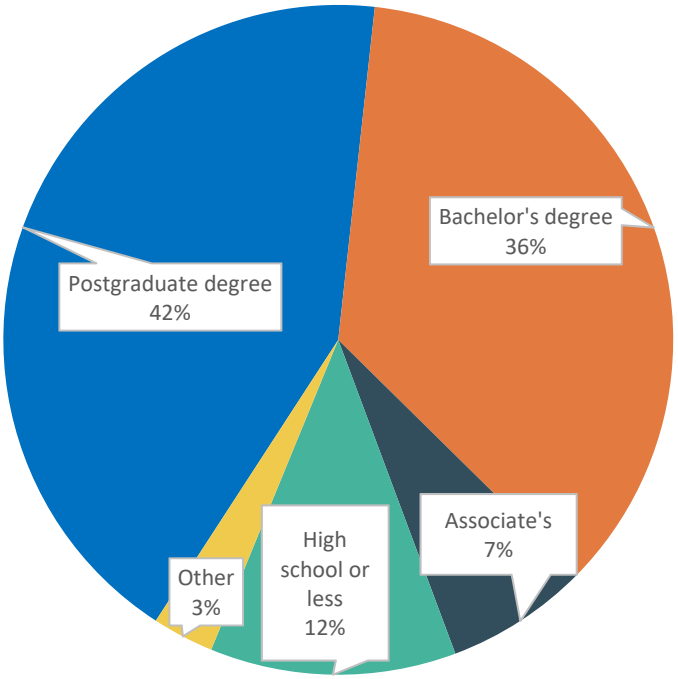
- Among Jewish adults who are not currently in high school, 62% are employed, 7% are unemployed, and 30% are not working.
- One-in-five Jewish households are struggling financially, including those who said they cannot make ends meet (3%) or are just managing to make ends meet (18%).
- Among Jewish adults who are financially struggling, 21% are unemployed, and 18% are not working for other reasons.
- A total of 7% of Jewish households in Metropolitan Chicago are below 200% of the federal poverty level, including 3% that are below 100% of the federal poverty level.
- Nineteen percent of Jewish households spend more than 30% of their income on housing costs. Nine percent of Jewish households are unable to pay in full an unexpected $400 emergency expense with cash, money currently in a bank account, or on a credit card.
- Among all Jewish households, 11% lacked funds for some necessity in the approximately six-month period after March 2020.
- Jewish households in City Far North have more financial challenges than in any other region. Approximately one third of Jewish households in City Far North (34%) are struggling financially.
- Jewish households with parents of pre-K children include the largest share of those who are struggling financially (31%). Eighteen percent of those households had at least one financial hardship since March 2020.
- Seventeen percent of parents are not at all confident that they will be able to afford their children's college education, and 16% are not too confident. Twelve percent of adults ages 40 and over are not at all confident they will have enough money for retirement, and 13% are not too confident.
- Jewish households that are struggling financially experienced the greatest impact from the financial downturn during the COVID-19 pandemic. Of Jewish households that are struggling, 59% reported that their financial situation worsened since the beginning of 2020. In contrast, 8% of well-off households reported that their financial situation declined.

Education and employment

High educational attainment (highest educational degree earned in an individual's lifetime) is associated with increased employment opportunities and financial well-being. Historically, the US Jewish community has higher educational attainment than in the US community overall. Among all US Jews, 58% have a college or postgraduate degree, compared to about 30% of US adults nationally.[51]

Nearly four-in-five Jewish adults in Metropolitan Chicago have either a bachelor's degree (36%) or a postgraduate degree (42%) (Figure 10.1). Jews in Metropolitan Chicago have higher levels of educational attainment than Jews nationally; among all US Jews, 30% have a bachelor's degree, and 28% have a postgraduate degree.[52]

Figure 10.1. Educational attainment of Metropolitan Chicago Jewish adults



Of Jewish adults who are not currently in high school, 62% were employed at the time of the study, 7% were unemployed, and 30% were not working. (Table 10.1). Included in the 62% who described themselves as employed, 46% are working one full-time position, 11% are working one part-time position, and 5% are working in multiple positions.

Among the 7% who are unemployed, 28% have been unemployed for six months or less, 54% have been unemployed for 6-12 months, and 18% have been unemployed for 12 months or more (not shown in table). Among the 30% of Jewish adults who are not working, 25% are retired, 3% choose not to work, 1% are full-time students, and 1% are on medical leave or disability.

[51] Pew Research Center, 2021.
[52] Pew Research Center, 2021.

Table 10.1. Employment status of Jewish adults not currently in high school

	Jewish adults not in high school (%)
Employed	62
Full-time in one job or position	46
Part-time in one job or position	11
Working in multiple positions	5
Unemployed	7
Unemployed currently but expect to return to job	2
Unemployed but looking for work	5
Not working	30
Retired	25
Not working by choice	3
Full-time student	1
On medical leave or disability	1

City Far North includes the largest share of Jewish adults who are unemployed (15%) (Table 10.2). All three city regions include smaller shares of Jewish adults who are not working compared to the suburban regions. Among Jewish adults who are financially struggling, 21% are unemployed, and 18% are not working for other reasons.

Jewish adults with less than a college degree constitute the largest share (41%) of those who are not working. This share includes 6% who are full-time students, 4% who are on medical leave/disability, 1% not working by choice, and 30% who are retired (not show in in table).

Table 10.2. Employment status of Jewish adults, by subgroup

	Employed (%)	Unemployed (%)	Not working (%)
Jewish adults not in high school	62	7	30
Region			
City Far North	67	15	18
City North	70	8	22
City Other	78	5	17
Near North Suburbs	58	5	37
North Suburbs Cook	53	5	42
North Suburbs Lake	51	8	41
Near NW Suburbs	59	8	33
Far NW Suburbs	71	3	26
West Suburbs	68	7	25
South Suburbs	--	--	--
Jewish engagement			
Personal	66	9	25
Participant	59	5	37
Holiday	64	8	28
Communal	65	7	28
Immersed	63	8	30
Lifestage			
Parent Pre-K	77	15	8
Parent K-12	83	9	8
Couple 22-39	90	8	2
Couple 40-69	61	7	32
Couple 70+	26	1	73
Single 22-39	82	11	6
Single 40-69	66	8	26
Single 70+	13	3	84
Multigenerational	74	7	19
Financial situation			
Struggling	61	21	18
Enough	63	6	32
Extra	70	2	28
Well-off	64	1	35
Education			
Less than college	49	10	41
Bachelor's degree	68	9	22
Graduate degree	65	5	29
Other	45	6	49

Income and financial situation

The financial situation of households can be measured in a variety of ways. In this section, financial situation is described using reported household income as well as a self-reported subjective assessment of financial status. Information about household assets is reported because overall financial situation is based on income and assets. The section describes the relationship among these measures to provide a fuller picture of the financial health of Metropolitan Chicago Jewish households.

Fourteen percent of Jewish households have less than $50,000, and 26% of Jewish households have $150,000 or more (Table 10.3). More than one in five households (22%) declined to provide income information. However, in tables below, more information is provided on those households. In 2010, 24% of households reported that they earned less than $50,000 annually.

The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) determines the federal poverty level (FPL) annually, using a formula based on household income and household size.[53] Using that formula, 7% of Jewish households in Metropolitan Chicago are below 200% of the federal poverty level (12,000 households), including 3% who are below 100% of the federal poverty level. In 2010, 11% of households had incomes less than 200% of the federal poverty level.

Among Metropolitan Chicago Jewish households in 2020, 17% have incomes of $200,000 or more (not shown in table). In comparison, one-in-ten US Jewish households report income of less than $30,000, and 23% have incomes of $200,000 or more.[54]

Table 10.3. Household income

Income	2010 Jewish households (%)	Income	2020 Jewish households (%)
Less than $50,000	24	Less than $50,000	14
$50,000 to $74,999	12	$50,000 to $74,999	11
$75,000 to $99,999	14	$75,000 to $99,999	11
$100,000 to $149,999	14	$100,000 to $149,999	16
$150,000 or more	15	$150,000 or more	26
Prefer not to answer, but over $25,000	11	Prefer not to answer	22
No information provided	10		
Federal poverty level		Federal poverty level	
< 150% FPL	7	< 100% FPL	3
< 200% FPL (includes <150%)	11	< 200% FPL (includes <100%)	7

As another means to assess financial well-being, the survey asked respondents to provide a subjective assessment of their household's financial situation. Three percent of Jewish households

[53] See https://aspe.hhs.gov/topics/poverty-economic-mobility/poverty-guidelines/prior-hhs-poverty-guidelines-federal-register-references/2021-poverty-guidelines#threshholds

[54] Pew Research Center, 2021.

said they cannot make ends meet, and another 18% stated they are just managing to make ends meet (Table 10.4). These two groups are combined for purposes of this report into a single category referred to as "struggling" and constitute 21% of Jewish households. About one third of households (34%) stated they have enough money, about one quarter (24%) said they have extra money, and 21% described themselves as well-off.

In 2010, a similar share (21%) described themselves as unable or just managing to make ends meet. A slightly smaller share, 15%, described themselves as well-off.

Across all US Jews in a survey prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, 53% described their financial situation as "living comfortably.[55]

Table 10.4. Financial situation, 2010 and 2020

Report Category	Response option	Jewish households, 2010 (%)	Jewish households, 2020 (%)
Struggling	Cannot make ends meet	2	3
	Just managing to make ends meet	19	18
Enough	Have enough money (2020) / Comfortable (2010)	49	34
Extra	Have extra money	15	24
Well-off	Well-off	15	21

[55] Pew Research Center, 2021.

Overall financial situation is related to household assets as well as income. Households that described their financial situation as enough, extra, or well-off were asked about their household assets. Among this group, 46% have less than $1 million in household assets, 24% have $1 million or more, and 30% preferred not to answer (Table 10.5). Households that are well-off had more assets than other households; half (49%) had $1 million or more in assets.

Table 10.5. Household assets

	< $1 million (%)	$1 million or more (%)	Prefer not to answer (%)
Jewish households with enough, extra, or well-off	46	24	30
Financial situation			
Enough	60	10	30
Extra	55	19	26
Well-off	24	49	27

Household income and perceived financial situation are not always consistent. There are low-income Jewish households that describe themselves as struggling, and there are high-income Jewish households that describe themselves as struggling (Table 10.6). For example, while more than half of Jewish households (55%) earning less than $50,000 a year stated that they are struggling, the remainder either reported that they have enough (29%), have extra (12%), or are well-off (5%). Based on income and household size, nearly all of this group (92%) are classified as under 200% of FPL. Although, the majority (85%) have assets under $1 million, 4% have assets of $1 million or more. Among Jewish households with income of $200,000 or more, 4% described themselves as struggling, and 53% described themselves as well-off. Of households at this income level, 58% have assets of $1 million or more.

Among Jewish households that did not share their income level, 11% described themselves as struggling, and 24% described themselves as well-off. Six percent of these households have assets of $1 million or more.

Table 10.6. Income and financial situation

	Financial situation				Poverty	Assets*		
	Struggling (%)	Enough (%)	Extra (%)	Well-off (%)	< 200% FPL by income level (%)	Assets< $1 million (%)	Assets $1 million or more (%)	Assets Prefer not to answer (%)
All Jewish households	21	34	24	21	7	46	24	30
Less than $50,000	55	29	12	5	92	85	4	12
$50,000 to $74,999	32	42	20	6	5	80	5	15
$75,000 to $99,999	24	42	23	10	1	63	17	19
$100,000 to $149,999	18	33	34	15	0	60	25	14
$150,000 to $199,999	5	31	38	26	0	60	25	16
$200,000 or more	4	17	26	53	0	31	58	11
Prefer not to answer	11	39	26	24	2**	17	6	77

*Asked only if Financial Situation is enough, extra, or well-off

**FPL is calculated for households who did not provide their household income information but provided sufficient information about income range.

The financial situations of Jewish households vary by region, Jewish engagement category, and lifestage.

One third of households in City Far North (34%) are struggling financially (Table 10.7). The regions with the largest share of households that are well-off are City Other (33%), City North (28%), North Suburbs Cook (28%), and North Suburbs Lake (26%).

Lifestage is a significant predictor of a Jewish household's financial status. The largest share of Jewish households that are financially struggling (31%) are those with parents of pre-K children. Jewish households with couples ages 70 or older include the largest share of those that are well-off (29%).

Table 10.7. Financial situation by subgroup

	Struggling (%)	Enough (%)	Extra (%)	Well-off (%)	Total (%)
All Jewish households	21	34	24	21	100
Region					
City Far North	34	32	22	12	100
City North	14	33	25	28	100
City Other	20	22	25	33	100
Near North Suburbs	21	40	24	15	100
North Suburbs Cook	12	34	26	28	100
North Suburbs Lake	18	31	25	26	100
Near NW Suburbs	19	45	25	11	100
Far NW Suburbs	26	39	23	12	100
West Suburbs	23	24	33	20	100
South Suburbs	--	--	--	--	100
Jewish engagement					
Personal	22	32	28	18	100
Participant	14	32	26	28	100
Holiday	22	40	19	19	100
Communal	19	32	25	24	100
Immersed	24	29	25	22	100
Lifestage					
Parent Pre-K	31	27	24	17	100
Parent K-12	23	38	22	18	100
Couple 22-39	7	34	36	24	100
Couple 40-69	17	29	29	25	100
Couple 70+	9	34	28	29	100
Single 22-39	23	25	27	25	100
Single 40-69	27	35	23	15	100
Single 70+	19	43	21	17	100
Multigenerational	27	32	20	22	100

Financial vulnerability

In total, 18% of Jewish households indicated they are just managing to make ends meet, and another 3% reported that they cannot make ends meet (see Table 10.4, above). Of the remaining Jewish households, 8% said that there were times in the past three years when they could not make ends meet or were just managing to make ends meet (not shown in table).

To explore the experience of financial vulnerability, additional questions regarding specific financial limitations and hardships were included. Among all Jewish households, 11% lacked funds for some necessity in the six-month period beginning March 2020, the start of the pandemic (Table 10.8). Six percent of Jewish households did not have enough money to pay for medical and dental care that they needed; 5% lacked funds for utilities, other bills, or debts; 4% lacked funds for needed food; and 4% lacked funds to pay rent or housing costs. Another 5% of households did not have a financial need in that time period but lacked funds for a necessity at some time during the previous three years.

Among all US Jews in the time prior to the COVID-19 pandemic,[56] one quarter (26%) of households reported they had difficulty paying for medical care, their rent or mortgage, food, or other bills or debts. Because this measure is not comparable to the one included in the present study (which asked specifically about lacking funds for necessities, not about difficulties), it is not included in Table 10.8.

Table 10.8. Lacked funds for necessities, all Jewish households

	Within the past six months (%)	Not in past six months, but during previous three years (%)
Any of these	11	5
Pay for medical or dental care	6	4
Pay for utilities, other bills, or debts	5	1
Buy needed food	4	1
Pay rent or housing costs	4	2

[56] Pew Research Center, 2021.

Seven percent of Jewish households receive some public benefit, including 4% receiving Medicaid, 3% SSDI or SSI, and 3% food stamps or SNAP (Table 10.9).

Table 10.9. Public benefits

	All Jewish households (%)
Any public benefit	7
Medicaid	4
Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI)	3
Food stamps or SNAP	3
Home energy or utility assistance programs	1
Subsidized housing	1
Daycare assistance	1

Other benchmarks that are commonly used to assess financial vulnerability include spending on housing costs and ability to cover emergency expenses. Nineteen percent of Jewish households spend more than 30% of their income on housing costs (Table 10.10).[57] Nine percent of Jewish households are unable to pay in full an unexpected $400 emergency expense with cash, money currently in a bank account, or a credit card.[58]

Consistent with numbers presented earlier in this chapter, Jewish households in City Far North have more financial challenges than in other regions. Among these households, 34% spend more than 30% of their income on housing, 13% are unable to pay an unexpected $400 expense, and 21% had one of the listed financial hardships in the time period since March 2020.

Jewish households with singles ages 22-39 include the largest share of households that spend more than 30% of their income on housing (36%), and households with parents of Pre-K children experience the highest levels of other financial challenges. Eighteen percent of Pre-K parent households had at least one financial hardship since March 2020.

[57] The US Census American Community Survey includes this metric. In 2019, 30% of US households spent 30% or more of their income on housing costs. https://data.census.gov/cedsci/

[58] According to the US Federal Reserve, in 2018, 39% of US households could not cover a $400 emergency expense https://www.federalreserve.gov/publications/2019-economic-well-being-of-us-households-in-2018-dealing-with-unexpected-expenses.htm

Table 10.10. Financial challenges

	Spends >30% of income on housing (%)	Unable to pay an unexpected $400 emergency expense (%)	Any financial hardship, past six months (%)	Any financial hardship, six months-three years ago (%)	Any public benefit now (%)
All Jewish households	19	9	11	5	7
Region					
City Far North	34	13	21	6	14
City North	20	3	4	6	2
City Other	19	9	11	3	6
Near North Suburbs	19	9	13	7	9
North Suburbs Cook	15	5	5	2	3
North Suburbs Lake	15	5	6	1	3
Near NW Suburbs	21	10	5	5	7
Far NW Suburbs	19	7	14	9	8
West Suburbs	14	12	12	3	5
South Suburbs	--	--	--	--	--
Jewish engagement					
Personal	22	8	12	4	7
Participant	17	5	7	7	5
Holiday	19	12	8	4	7
Communal	19	7	10	5	5
Immersed	23	9	14	7	9
Lifestage					
Parent Pre-K	29	15	18	2	13
Parent K-12	23	7	12	6	8
Couple 22-39	17	8	5	6	1
Couple 40-69	13	6	8	4	5
Couple 70+	8	3	4	1	4
Single 22-39	36	10	11	11	4
Single 40-69	26	8	10	8	7
Single 70+	10	10	8	2	12
Multigenerational	22	9	17	5	7
Financial situation					30
Struggling	50	32	44	12	1
Enough	20	3	3	5	< 1
Extra	9	1	2	3	0
Well-off	4	2	0	1	7

Jewish adults expressed concerns about upcoming financial needs (Table 10.11). Seventeen percent of parents are not at all confident that they will be able to afford their children's college education, and 16% are not too confident. Twelve percent of Jewish adults ages 40 and over are not at all confident they will have enough money for retirement, and 13% are not too confident.

In contrast, the majority of Jewish adults are very confident that they will be able to afford basic living expenses (71%) and that they will be able to afford healthcare (60%). Among synagogue members, the majority (60%) are very confident that they will be able to afford their synagogue membership.

Table 10.11. Confidence in financial future, all Jewish adults

	Not at all confident (%)	Not too confident (%)	Somewhat confident (%)	Very confident (%)	N/A (%)
I will be able to afford children's college education (parent of minor child)	17	16	31	29	6
I will have enough money for retirement (age > 40)	12	13	34	38	3
I will be able to afford children's Jewish school or camp (child currently in Jewish education)	9	14	31	39	7
I will keep current savings and/or investments	9	10	34	44	3
I will be able to afford the standard of living I am accustomed to	5	9	33	53	< 1
I will be able to afford synagogue membership (current synagogue member)	4	8	26	60	3
I will be able to afford healthcare	4	6	29	60	1
I will be able to afford basic living expenses	3	3	22	71	1

Jewish households in City Far North have greater financial concerns than those in other regions. Of City Far North Jewish adults, 57% are not confident about affording college for their children, and 39% are not confident that they will have sufficient retirement funds (Table 10.12a). Twenty-three percent of City Far North Jewish adults are not confident they can afford healthcare, and 11% are not confident they can afford basic living expenses (Table 10.12b).

Significant financial concerns are also present in the Near North Suburbs. Among Jewish adults in that region, 32% are not confident about affording college for their children, and 35% are not confident that they will have sufficient retirement funds. Sixteen percent of Jewish adults in Near North Suburbs are not confident they can afford healthcare, and 14% are not confident they can afford basic living expenses.

Information about the need for and use of financial services appears in Table 10.13 and Table 10.14.

Table 10.12a. Not at all or not too confident in the financial future, by subgroup

	Afford children's college education (parent of minor child) (%)	Have enough money for retirement (age > 40) (%)	Afford children's Jewish school or camp (child currently in Jewish ed.) (%)	Keep current savings and/or investments (%)
All Jewish adults	33	25	23	18
Region				
City Far North	57	39	30	28
City North	18	17	13	13
City Other	25	21	--	14
Near North Suburbs	32	35	21	26
North Suburbs Cook	19	14	--	13
North Suburbs Lake	25	23	23	17
Near NW Suburbs	--	24	--	20
Far NW Suburbs	--	26	--	13
West Suburbs	--	21	--	14
South Suburbs	--	--	--	--
Jewish engagement				
Personal	24	26	--	15
Participant	22	23	--	16
Holiday	40	26	--	25
Communal	31	18	19	13
Immersed	40	31	30	23
Lifestage				
Parent Pre-K	37	52	23	27
Parent K-12	29	33	22	20
Couple 22-39	n/a	n/a	n/a	14
Couple 40-69	n/a	19	n/a	13
Couple 70+	n/a	11	n/a	10
Single 22-39	n/a	n/a	n/a	18
Single 40-69	n/a	31	n/a	19
Single 70+	n/a	17	n/a	17
Multigenerational	n/a	30	n/a	22
Financial situation				
Struggling	69	73	45	53
Enough	28	19	23	16
Extra	15	8	12	4
Well-off	2	< 1	2	1

Table 10.12b. Not at all or not too confident in the financial future, by subgroup

	Afford the standard of living I am accustomed to (%)	Afford synagogue membership (current synagogue member) (%)	Afford healthcare (%)	Afford basic living expenses (%)
All Jewish adults	14	11	10	6
Region				
City Far North	27	12	23	11
City North	12	9	6	3
City Other	14	11	5	2
Near North Suburbs	21	10	16	14
North Suburbs Cook	10	15	7	5
North Suburbs Lake	14	11	8	6
Near NW Suburbs	12	7	14	8
Far NW Suburbs	11	--	8	3
West Suburbs	10	8	9	5
South Suburbs	--	--	--	--
Jewish engagement				
Personal	15	--	11	6
Participant	13	--	9	5
Holiday	18	15	13	9
Communal	13	11	8	4
Immersed	16	11	12	7
Lifestage				
Parent Pre-K	18	8	9	8
Parent K-12	16	11	12	7
Couple 22-39	10	--	7	5
Couple 40-69	11	3	9	3
Couple 70+	7	9	6	3
Single 22-39	17	--	14	5
Single 40-69	15	15	12	7
Single 70+	13	7	5	7
Multigenerational	21	16	15	10
Financial situation				
Struggling	52	46	35	24
Enough	10	12	7	2
Extra	1	2	2	< 1
Well-off	1	1	1	1

Table 10.13. Financial services needed since March 2020*

	Did not require (%)	Needed, did not receive (%)	Received only from non-Jewish org. (%)	Received only from Jewish org. (%)	Received from both J and NJ org. (%)
Any service	82	9	8	2	1
Employment related services	92	3	4	1	1
Financial assistance	94	3	2	1	1
Help with gaining or maintaining public benefits	95	2	2	< 1	1
Food assistance	96	1	1	1	1
Housing assistance	97	1	1	< 1	1
Help with obtaining or paying for legal services	98	1	1	< 1	< 1
Other	98	1	< 1	< 1	< 1

*The first row does not add up to 100% because it includes any of the listed services. Households might have received only some needed services, received some services only from Jewish organizations, only from non-Jewish organizations, or from both.

Table 10.14. Financial service need and receipt by Jewish organization

		Among the households that needed a financial service…		
	Needed at least one financial service (%)	Did not receive at least one financial service (%)	Received at least one financial service from a NJ org. (%)	Received at least one financial service from a Jewish org. (%)
All Jewish households	18	50	55	21
Region				
City Far North	30	41	53	44
City North	17	46	57	12
City Other	22	--	--	--
Near North Suburbs	17	58	39	24
North Suburbs Cook	9	--	--	--
North Suburbs Lake	11	--	--	--
Near NW Suburbs	18	--	--	--
Far NW Suburbs	16	--	--	--
West Suburbs	16	--	--	--
South Suburbs	--	--	--	--
Jewish engagement				
Personal	17	--	--	--
Participant	15	--	--	--
Holiday	19	--	--	--
Communal	19	42	60	17
Immersed	24	52	56	36
Lifestage				
Parent Pre-K	24	34	54	49
Parent K-12	24	45	58	22
Couple 22-39	19	--	--	--
Couple 40-69	14	--	--	--
Couple 70+	3	--	--	--
Single 22-39	26	--	--	--
Single 40-69	16	--	--	--
Single 70+	12	--	--	--
Multigenerational	29	53	50	10
Financial situation				
Struggling	54	56	54	25
Enough	15	44	53	12
Extra	6	--	--	--
Well-off	6	--	--	--

Impact of finances on Jewish life

Because of differences in the ways that Orthodox and non-Orthodox Jewish adults view decision-making about Jewish activities, separate sets of questions were asked of Orthodox and non-Orthodox households about the impact of finances on their Jewish lives. The first set of tables refer to non-Orthodox households only.

In the year prior to the survey, 11% of non-Orthodox Jewish households made a change to their Jewish life due to financial constraints (Table 10.15). Six percent of these households reduced their contributions to Jewish causes, and 5% reduced their participation in Jewish activities.

Table 10.15. Changes to participation in Jewish life for financial reasons during past year, non-Orthodox households

Any reduction	11
Reduced contributions to Jewish causes	6
Reduced participation in Jewish activities	5
Did not enroll children in Jewish education, camp, or activities	1
Required financial assistance to enroll children in Jewish education, Jewish camp, or activities	1
Discontinued synagogue membership	1
Required financial assistance to maintain synagogue membership	< 1
Something else	1

Among non-Orthodox Jewish households that are financially struggling, 25% reduced their participation in Jewish life for financial reasons in the past year (Table 10.16). One quarter of households in the Immersed engagement group (25%) and 19% of households in the Communal group made some change in their Jewish life due to financial reasons.

Table 10.16. Any reduction to Jewish life for financial reasons during past year, non-Orthodox households

	Any reduction
Non-Orthodox Jewish households	11
Region	
City Far North	14
City North	8
City Other	10
Near North Suburbs	12
North Suburbs Cook	12
North Suburbs Lake	15
Near NW Suburbs	16
Far NW Suburbs	12
West Suburbs	8
South Suburbs	--
Jewish engagement	
Personal	3
Participant	12
Holiday	13
Communal	19
Immersed	25
Lifestage	
Parent Pre-K	13
Parent K-12	18
Couple 22-39	12
Couple 40-69	7
Couple 70+	9
Single 22-39	11
Single 40-69	15
Single 70+	14
Multigenerational	8
Financial situation	
Struggling	25
Enough	13
Extra	7
Well-off	4

Jewish adults in Orthodox households were asked the extent to which participation in Jewish life requires them to make financial sacrifices (Table 10.17). Over one third (35%) indicated that Jewish life did not require financial sacrifices, and 13% said that it very much required sacrifices.

Table 10.17. Extent that participation in Jewish life requires financial sacrifices, Orthodox households

	Orthodox Jewish households (%)
Not at all	35
A little	16
Somewhat	36
Very much	13

Question text: "To what extent does participation in Jewish life require financial sacrifices for you and your family?"

COVID-19 pandemic impact

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the employment situation of the majority of Jewish adults in Metropolitan Chicago (Table 10.18). Of all Jewish adults, 58% experienced some job change, including 29% of Jewish adults who started working from home. Sixteen percent of Jewish adults experienced reduced wages or hours, and 12% of Jewish adults lost a job or were furloughed.

Table 10.18. Changes to job situation since beginning of 2020

	All Jewish adults (%)
Any change	58
Started working from home	29
Pay or hours cut	16
Pay or compensation cut	11
Hours reduced	9
Any job loss	12
Laid off	7
Furloughed	4
Closed business	1
Hours increased	7
Started new job	7
Stopped working	4
Another change	8

For the majority of Jewish households (60%), their financial situation remained about the same since the beginning of 2020, and for 15% of Jewish households the financial situation improved (Table 10.19). Seven percent of Jewish households described their current financial situation as much worse than the beginning of 2020, and 19% described their financial situation as somewhat worse.

Table 10.19. Changes to financial situation since beginning of 2020

	All Jewish households (%)
Much worse than before	7
Somewhat worse than before	19
About the same as before	60
Somewhat better than before	12
Much better than before	3

Jewish households that are struggling financially experienced the greatest financial impact of the pandemic (Table 10.20). Of Jewish households that are struggling, 59% reported that their financial situation worsened since the beginning of 2020. In contrast, 8% of well-off households reported that their financial situation declined.

Table 10.20. Changes to financial situation since beginning of 2020, by subgroup

	Worse (%)	About the same (%)	Better (%)
All Jewish households	25	60	15
Region			
City Far North	34	50	16
City North	22	56	22
City Other	20	61	20
Near North Suburbs	25	63	12
North Suburbs Cook	20	71	8
North Suburbs Lake	30	59	11
Near NW Suburbs	26	66	8
Far NW Suburbs	26	58	16
West Suburbs	26	54	20
South Suburbs	--	--	--
Jewish engagement			
Personal	28	57	15
Participant	19	64	18
Holiday	25	61	14
Communal	24	58	18
Immersed	25	62	13
Lifestage			
Parent Pre-K	26	56	17
Parent K-12	30	56	14
Couple 22-39	23	46	30
Couple 40-69	27	60	13
Couple 70+	15	74	12
Single 22-39	18	58	24
Single 40-69	27	58	15
Single 70+	13	74	12
Multigenerational	37	52	12
Financial situation			
Struggling	59	37	5
Enough	27	65	7
Extra	9	66	25
Well-off	8	64	28

CHAPTER 11. HEALTH STATUS AND NEEDS

Jewish organizations seek to provide a range of services to meet the health and social service needs of community members. This chapter explores the health and social service needs of Jewish households, the extent to which they are receiving necessary services from Jewish and non-Jewish organizations, and household unmet needs.

Key findings

- Eighteen percent of Jewish households include at least one person whose work, schooling, or general activities are limited by a health issue such as chronic illness, mental or emotional health problem, disability, or special need.
- Of all Jewish households, 34% needed health services within the prior six months (53,000 households). Another 8% (12,500) needed no health services in the prior six months, but needed one or more health services in the prior three years. The greatest single health service needed is for mental health services; 24% of households (38,000) needed mental health services in the past six months.
- The need for mental health services is significantly higher among couples ages 22-39 (45%) and singles ages 22-39 (36%).
- There is a strong association between health and financial well-being. Among financially struggling Jewish households, 34% include someone with a chronic illness, disability, or special need, a much larger share than for households that are more financially secure.
- Financially struggling Jewish households reported greater needs for health and social services other than mental health services (36%), compared to households that are more financially secure.
- Of Jewish households that need health and social services, 21% did not receive any services. Eleven percent received services from Jewish organizations only, 55% from non-Jewish organizations only, and 13% received services from Jewish and non-Jewish organizations.
- Of the health and social services listed, the greatest unmet need is for assistance in obtaining or paying for medication or medical care. Among Jewish households that need this assistance, 44% did not receive it.
- Sixty-eight percent of financially struggling Jewish households experienced an increase in their need for health and social services during the pandemic. An increase in need for services was experienced most by Jewish households with Pre-K parents (64%), couples ages 22-39 (59%), and singles ages 22-39 (59%).
- In 15% of Jewish households, someone manages the care or personally provides care for a close relative or friend on a regular basis. The majority of these households (70%) are caring for parents. Twelve percent of the households are providing care for spouses. Nine percent of Jewish households are providing care for their adult (7%) and minor (2%) children. The remainder of Jewish households are providing care for other relatives or friends.

- Of older adult Jewish households, 10% reported that at least one older adult needs daily help with activities such as doing housework, preparing meals, dressing and undressing, taking a bath or shower, or walking up and down stairs
- Support networks are strongest among Pre-K parents (30% have a lot of people they can rely on), couples ages 22-39 (27% have a lot of people they can rely on) and singles ages 22-39 (25% have a lot of people they can rely on).
- Nine percent of Jewish adults believe they have had COVID-19, whether or not they have been tested.[59] Twenty-five percent of Jewish households include someone in the household who contracted COVID-19 and/or had a close friend or relative not in their household who became very ill or died from COVID-19.

Current health status

While the majority of Jewish adults reported that they are in excellent (31%) or very good (40%) health, 7% of Jewish adults said their health is fair, and 2% reported that it is poor (Table 11.1). This finding is consistent with the 2010 study.

There is a strong association between financial well-being and health. Among Jewish adults who are financially struggling, 23% are in excellent health and 20% in fair or poor health. In contrast, among those who are well-off, 47% are in excellent health and 4% are in fair or poor health.

[59] At the time of the survey, COVID-19 testing was not readily available for all who had symptoms.

Table 11.1. Health of Jewish adults

	Excellent (%)	Very good (%)	Good (%)	Fair or poor (%)
All Jewish adults	31	40	20	9
Region				
City Far North	32	46	16	6
City North	41	40	16	3
City Other	32	42	15	11
Near North Suburbs	25	34	27	14
North Suburbs Cook	30	37	21	12
North Suburbs Lake	40	34	18	8
Near NW Suburbs	24	32	26	18
Far NW Suburbs	20	51	21	8
West Suburbs	31	43	21	5
South Suburbs	17	42	34	7
Jewish engagement				
Personal	27	40	23	10
Participant	29	40	22	9
Holiday	26	37	21	16
Communal	35	42	17	5
Immersed	38	37	17	8
Lifestage				
Parent Pre-K	40	40	9	11
Parent K-12	38	40	16	6
Couple 22-39	33	49	16	2
Couple 40-69	29	44	19	8
Couple 70+	20	38	31	12
Single 22-39	34	43	17	5
Single 40-69	28	40	24	8
Single 70+	18	35	32	15
Multigenerational	36	35	19	10
Financial situation				
Struggling	23	34	23	20
Enough	23	43	25	10
Extra	35	46	17	2
Well-off	47	37	13	4

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a direct impact on the health of the Metropolitan Chicago Jewish community. At the time of the study, 9% of Jewish adults believed they have had COVID-19, whether or not they have been tested.[60] Twelve percent of Jewish households include someone who believes they had COVID-19 (Table 11.2).

Jewish households with children were affected by COVID-19 more than other households. In 21% of Jewish Pre-K households and 20% of Jewish K-12 households, someone believed they had COVID-19 at some point. Older adults reported the lowest rates of COVID-19: 4% of single adults 70 or older and 2% of couples 70 or older reported someone in their household had COVID-19.

Eleven percent of Jewish adults have had someone close to them, but not in their household, become very ill from COVID-19, and 4% have had someone close to them who passed away from COVID-19 (not shown in table). These individuals have lost close family members, relatives, and friends.

Twenty-five percent of Metropolitan Chicago Jewish households included someone in the household who contracted COVID-19 and/or had a close friend or relative not in their household who became very ill or passed away from COVID-19.

[60] At the time of the survey, COVID-19 testing was not readily available for all who had symptoms.

Table 11.2. Households with someone who had COVID-19

	Someone in household had COVID-19 (%)
All Jewish households	12
Region	
City Far North	16
City North	9
City Other	17
Near North Suburbs	12
North Suburbs Cook	5
North Suburbs Lake	9
Near NW Suburbs	7
Far NW Suburbs	15
West Suburbs	19
South Suburbs	--
Jewish engagement	
Personal	14
Participant	12
Holiday	10
Communal	8
Immersed	17
Lifestage	
Parent Pre-K	21
Parent K-12	20
Couple 22-39	15
Couple 40-69	10
Couple 70+	2
Single 22-39	11
Single 40-69	12
Single 70+	4
Multigenerational	17
Financial situation	
Struggling	17
Enough	12
Extra	11
Well-off	9

Chronic health issues, special needs, and disabilities

Eighteen percent of Jewish households include at least one person whose work, schooling, or general activities are limited by a health issue such as chronic illness, mental or emotional health problem, special need, or disability (Table 11.3). In this section, we refer to any of these conditions as "health issues."

More multigenerational households (26%), couples ages 70 or older (22%), and single adults ages 70 or older (24%) have a health issue, compared with all younger households. Thirty-four percent of financially struggling Jewish households include someone with a health issue, a larger share than in households that are more financially secure.

Seventeen percent of Jewish households include one or more adults with a health issue (not shown in table). Among Jewish households with minor children, 6% have a child with a health issue. Among Jewish households without children, 19% have an adult with a health issue.

Table 11.3. Households with health issues

	Household member has health issue (%)
All Jewish households	18
Region	
City Far North	23
City North	12
City Other	17
Near North Suburbs	25
North Suburbs Cook	17
North Suburbs Lake	16
Near NW Suburbs	19
Far NW Suburbs	22
West Suburbs	15
South Suburbs	--
Jewish engagement	
Personal	14
Participant	19
Holiday	22
Communal	18
Immersed	23
Lifestage	
Parent Pre-K	13
Parent K-12	15
Couple 22-39	17
Couple 40-69	18
Couple 70+	22
Single 22-39	14
Single 40-69	14
Single 70+	24
Multigenerational	26
Financial situation	
Struggling	34
Enough	18
Extra	11
Well-off	13

Among the 18% of Jewish households in which someone has a health issue, the majority (53%) suffer from a chronic illness (Table 11.4). Nine percent of all Jewish households include someone with a chronic illness. In Jewish households with children who have a health issue, 30% include a child with a developmental delay. This share represents 2% of all Jewish households with children.

Table 11.4. Types of health issues

Types	Households with health issues (%)	All households (%)
Jewish households	100	18
Adults and children		
Chronic illness	53	9
Mental or emotional health problems	32	6
Physical disability	29	5
Developmental or intellectual disability	7	1
Substance abuse/addiction	2	< 1
Complications related to COVID-19	< 1	< 1
Something else	15	3
Dementia	3	< 1
Households with children	Households with children who have health issues (%)	Households with children (%)
Any child health issue	100	6
Child with developmental delay	30	2

A larger share of Jewish households in City Far North and City North experience mental and emotional health issues (54% and 48% respectively) than Jewish households overall (32%) (Table 11.5). There are no significant differences in types of health issues by financial status.

Table 11.5. Types of health issues

	Chronic illness (%)	Mental or emotional health (%)	Physical disability (%)
Households with health issues	53	32	29
Region			
City Far North	50	54	32
City North	60	48	14
City Other	--	--	--
Near North Suburbs	55	29	25
North Suburbs Cook	--	--	--
North Suburbs Lake	--	--	--
Near NW Suburbs	--	--	--
Far NW Suburbs	--	--	--
West Suburbs	--	--	--
South Suburbs	--	--	--
Jewish engagement			
Personal	--	--	--
Participant	--	--	--
Holiday	46	32	34
Communal	54	43	25
Immersed	52	42	30
Lifestage			
Parent Pre-K	--	--	--
Parent K-12	47	49	21
Couple 22-39	--	--	--
Couple 40-69	58	27	39
Couple 70+	56	18	33
Single 22-39	--	--	--
Single 40-69	--	--	--
Single 70+	--	--	--
Multigenerational	57	32	30
Financial situation			
Struggling	51	36	30
Enough	50	35	30
Extra	56	42	15
Well-off	57	43	29

Health services needed and received

Thirty-four percent of Jewish households needed health services within the prior six months (53,000 households). Another 8% of Jewish households (12,500) needed no health services in the prior six months, but needed one or more services in the prior three years (Table 11.6). More than half of households (58%) did not need any services in the prior three years. The greatest single service need is for mental health services: 24% of Jewish households (38,000) needed mental health services in the past six months. For all other health services combined, 17% of Jewish households (26,500) needed at least one of these services. Many households needed multiple services: 7% of Jewish households (11,500) needed both mental health and other services (Not shown in table).

Table 11.6. Need for health services, all Jewish households

	Needed service past 6 months (%)	Not in past 6 months, but prior to that (past 3 years) (%)	Service not needed (%)	Total (%)
All Jewish households (any service)	34	8	58	100
Mental health treatment such as counseling, medication, psychotherapy, inpatient treatment	24	5	71	100
Any service need excluding mental health treatment	17	4	79	100
Assistance related to aging for self, spouse, or parent	9	2	89	100
Assistance in obtaining or paying for medical care, dental care, or vision care	7	1	92	100
Assistance for a child or adult who has a developmental or intellectual disability	3	< 1	97	100
Assistance for a victim, bystander, or witness of domestic violence	1	< 1	99	100
Other	2	< 1	98	100

Table 11.7 shows the types of services that were needed in the past six months and in the previous three years. Column 1 shows the proportion of Jewish households who needed any of the listed services in the past three years. The need for mental health services in the last six months appears in column 2 and need for all other services combined appears in column 3.

The need for any service is higher among Jewish households with young singles, young couples, and parents, compared to older adults and Jewish households without children. For example, among couples ages 22-39, 64% needed at least one service in the past three years, including 45% who needed mental health services. Among Jewish households with singles ages 22-39, 57% needed at least one service, including 36% who needed mental health services. Almost half of Jewish Pre-K households (45%) needed at least one service as did over half of Jewish K-12 households (54%).

Financially struggling Jewish households reported greater needs for any service (58%), compared to households that are more financially secure. More than one third (36%) of financially struggling Jewish households needed a service other than a mental health service.

Table 11.7. Health service needs, by subgroup

	Any service needed, past 3 years	Mental health service only, past 6 mos. (%)	Other service, past 6 mos. (%)	Any service, 6 mos.-3 years ago (%)	No services needed (%)
All Jewish households	42	17	17	8	58
Region*					
City Far North	51	23	23	6	49
City North	47	31	9	6	53
City Other	55	23	24	9	45
Near North Suburbs	45	15	21	8	55
North Suburbs Cook	34	12	13	8	66
North Suburbs Lake	40	14	20	7	60
Near NW Suburbs	40	16	12	12	60
Far NW Suburbs	37	10	18	9	63
West Suburbs	33	15	8	10	67
South Suburbs	--	--	--	--	--
Jewish Engagement					
Personal	39	18	14	7	61
Participant	44	22	16	6	56
Holiday	43	17	17	10	57
Communal	49	23	17	9	51
Immersed	46	19	20	7	54
Lifestage*					
Parent Pre-K	45	15	25	6	55
Parent K-12	54	25	23	6	46
Couple 22-39	64	45	11	8	36
Couple 40-69	35	13	12	10	65
Couple 70+	19	6	10	3	81
Single 22-39	57	36	11	10	43
Single 40-69	33	11	14	7	67
Single 70+	31	6	15	10	69
Multigenerational	61	24	26	11	39
Financial situation					
Struggling	58	12	36	10	42
Enough	40	18	15	7	60
Extra	41	25	8	9	59
Well-off	37	22	8	7	63
Any health need/issue*					
No	39	19	12	8	61
Yes	65	22	36	7	35

Among the 34% of Jewish households who needed health services (53,000 households), about half (52%, 27,500 households) reported that their need for at least one service increased in the period since the start of the pandemic in March 2020 (Table 11.8). The largest increase in service need was for financial assistance in obtaining or paying for medication and medical care.

Table 11.8. Change in needs since March 2020, among households that needed health services (34% of all households)

	Need increased (%)	Need decreased (%)	Need stayed the same (%)
All Jewish households (any service)	52	5	42
Assistance in obtaining or paying for medication, medical care, dental care, or vision care	65	2	33
Mental health treatment such as counseling, medication, psychotherapy, inpatient treatment	47	5	48
Assistance for a child or adult who has a developmental or intellectual disability	34	1	66
Assistance related to aging for self, spouse, or parent	57	4	39
Assistance for a victim, bystander, or witness of domestic violence	--	--	--
Other services	--	--	--

Among Jewish households that required health services, the largest share of households that experienced an increased need were those with Pre-K parents (64%), couples ages 22-39 (59%) and singles ages 22-39 (59%) (Table 11.9). Sixty-eight percent of financially struggling Jewish households experienced an increase in their need for health services.

Table 11.9. Increased need for health services since March 2020, among households that required health services (34% of all households)

	Need for service increased since March 2020 (%)
Jewish households that used a health service	52
Region	
City Far North	63
City North	51
City Other	45
Near North Suburbs	58
North Suburbs Cook	54
North Suburbs Lake	46
Near NW Suburbs	38
Far NW Suburbs	46
West Suburbs	38
South Suburbs	--
Jewish engagement	
Personal	52
Participant	47
Holiday	36
Communal	59
Immersed	54
Lifestage	
Parent Pre-K	64
Parent K-12	45
Couple 22-39	59
Couple 40-69	53
Couple 70+	26
Single 22-39	59
Single 40-69	44
Single 70+	42
Multigenerational	51
Financial situation	
Struggling	68
Enough	50
Extra	39
Well-off	41
Any health need/issue	
No	48
Yes	55

Of those Jewish households that needed services, 21% did not receive any required services (Table 11.10). Eleven percent of Jewish households received services from Jewish organizations only, 55% from non-Jewish organizations only, and 13% received services from Jewish and non-Jewish organizations. The greatest unmet health need was for assistance in obtaining or paying for medication or medical care. Among Jewish households that needed this assistance, 44% did not receive it. In addition to the 21% who did not receive any needed services, another 6% of Jewish households received only some of the services they required (not shown in table).

Table 11.10. Receipt of health services since March 2020, of households that required health services (34% of all households)

	Didn't receive (%)	Received from Jewish org. only (%)	Received from non-Jewish org. only (%)	Received from both (%)
Jewish households that required any health service	21	11	55	13
Assistance in obtaining or paying for medication, medical care, dental care, or vision care	44	10	36	11
Mental health treatment such as counseling, medication, psychotherapy, inpatient treatment	15	12	63	10
Assistance for a child or adult who has a developmental or intellectual disability	32	7	47	13
Assistance related to aging for self, spouse, or parent	30	8	48	14
Assistance for a victim, bystander, or witness of domestic violence	--	--	--	--
Other services	--	--	--	--

Regardless of their current needs, Jewish adults were asked about their preference for receiving health, employment, or financial services from a Jewish organization. Overall, 9% of Jewish adults felt it was very important that these services be provided by a Jewish organization, and 43% said it was not at all important (Table 11.11). Jewish adults in the Immersed engagement group were most likely to feel that it was very important that services be provided by a Jewish organization (24%), although 23% indicated it was not at all important. There were no significant differences in attitudes between those Jewish adults who currently needed services (45% not at all important services by provided by Jewish organization) and those who did not need services (40% not at all important services by provided by Jewish organization).

Table 11.11. Importance that health, employment, or financial services be provided by Jewish organizations

	Not at all (%)	A little (%)	Somewhat (%)	Very (%)
All Jewish adults	43	25	23	9
Region				
City Far North	44	16	21	19
City North	53	24	15	7
City Other	54	21	21	4
Near North Suburbs	35	28	26	12
North Suburbs Cook	39	25	29	7
North Suburbs Lake	35	22	33	11
Near NW Suburbs	34	29	28	10
Far NW Suburbs	48	21	23	8
West Suburbs	53	32	11	4
South Suburbs	--	--	--	--
Jewish engagement				
Personal	65	20	12	3
Participant	57	21	19	3
Holiday	40	26	25	8
Communal	34	33	25	7
Immersed	23	20	33	24
Lifestage				
Parent Pre-K	46	20	24	10
Parent K-12	42	21	22	15
Couple 22-39	56	30	10	4
Couple 40-69	41	27	24	8
Couple 70+	41	23	27	8
Single 22-39	64	20	10	7
Single 40-69	48	23	21	8
Single 70+	34	24	31	12
Multigenerational	36	28	27	10
Financial situation				
Struggling	35	23	27	16
Enough	42	27	23	8
Extra	49	26	19	5
Well-off	51	20	22	7
Any health need/issue				
No	45	24	22	9
Yes	40	26	24	10

Question text: "If you were to need help related to health, employment, finances, or other needs, how important would it be to you that those services be provided by a Jewish organization?"

Caregiving and older adults

The effects of ill health extend beyond the person with the illness to family and caretakers. In 15% of Jewish households, someone manages the care or personally provides care for a close relative or friend on a regular basis (aside from routine childcare) (Table 11.12).

Of the 15% of Jewish households that include a caregiver, the majority (70%) are caring for parents (not shown in table). Twelve percent of Jewish households are providing care for spouses. Other Jewish households are providing care for their adult (7%) and minor (2%) children. Nine percent of parents or spouses being cared for live in an assisted living facility, nursing home, or independent senior community.

Caregiving responsibility is highest among Jewish households with couples ages 40-69; 23% of these households include a caregiver. In multigenerational Jewish households (those that include parents living with adult children), 22% include a caregiver.

Table 11.12. Caregivers

	Someone in household manages or provides care (%)
All Jewish households	15
Region	
City Far North	9
City North	11
City Other	10
Near North Suburbs	16
North Suburbs Cook	19
North Suburbs Lake	16
Near NW Suburbs	15
Far NW Suburbs	19
West Suburbs	12
South Suburbs	--
Jewish engagement	
Personal	11
Participant	12
Holiday	16
Communal	15
Immersed	17
Lifestage	
Parent Pre-K	6
Parent K-12	17
Couple 22-39	4
Couple 40-69	23
Couple 70+	15
Single 22-39	7
Single 40-69	11
Single 70+	6
Multigenerational	22
Financial situation	
Struggling	16
Enough	15
Extra	10
Well-off	13

Older adult Jewish households, in which at least one person is age 65 or older, comprise 38% of all Jewish households. Two percent of these older adult Jewish households are based in an assisted living facility, nursing home, or independent senior living building or community (not shown in table). Among the 11% of Jewish households in which everyone is ages 75 or older, 9% reside in one of these senior living facilities.

Of older adult Jewish households, 10% reported at least one older adult needs daily help with activities such as doing housework, preparing meals, dressing and undressing, taking a bath or shower, or walking up and down stairs (Table 11.13). Older adult Jewish households that are struggling financially need more assistance; 22% of these households include someone needing help with daily activities.

In 2010, 24% of Jewish older adults living alone needed assistance with activities of daily living, as did 15% of those living with others. Nine percent of Jewish older adults ages 65 to 74 needed help with activities of daily living, 16% of those ages 75 to 34, and 48% of those ages 85 and over.

Table 11.13. Older adult households in need of help with daily activities

	Need help with daily activities (%)
Jewish households with someone 65+	10
Region	
City Far North	10
City North	2
City Other	15
Near North Suburbs	10
North Suburbs Cook	10
North Suburbs Lake	5
Near NW Suburbs	7
Far NW Suburbs	18
West Suburbs	6
South Suburbs	--
Jewish engagement	
Personal	6
Participant	12
Holiday	12
Communal	7
Immersed	13
Lifestage	
Parent Pre-K	--
Parent K-12	--
Couple 22-39	n/a
Couple 40-69	3
Couple 70+	8
Single 22-39	n/a
Single 40-69	4
Single 70+	13
Multigenerational	23
Financial situation	
Struggling	22
Enough	10
Extra	5
Well-off	5

Thirty-four percent of older adults in Jewish households who need care receive the care from a paid provider who does not live with them (Table 11.14). Another 27% of older adults in Jewish households receive care from a relative who lives in their household. Twenty-four percent of older adults in Jewish households do not receive any care but need it.

Table 11.14. Caregiver for older adults who need help with daily activities

Who provides care	Older adults who need care (%)
Paid care provider who does not live-in	34
Relative in same household	27
Relative in different household	8
Paid, live-in care provider	4
Someone else	12
Do not receive care on a regular basis	24

Support networks

Jewish adults of all ages, regardless of need, were asked about people in their personal support network who live nearby. Fourteen percent of Jewish adults have a lot of people living nearby who they can rely on, and 33% have a fair number of people (Table 11.15). Support networks are strongest among Pre-K parents (30% have a lot of people they can rely on), couples ages 22-39 (27% have a lot of people they can rely on) and singles ages 22-39 (25% have a lot of people they can rely on).

Table 11.15. Size of local support network

	No one (%)	Just a few people (%)	A fair amount of people (%)	A lot of people (%)
All Jewish adults	5	47	33	14
Region				
City Far North	5	37	40	18
City North	2	40	38	21
City Other	6	40	34	20
Near North Suburbs	7	51	29	13
North Suburbs Cook	1	52	32	14
North Suburbs Lake	2	39	39	20
Near NW Suburbs	7	49	30	14
Far NW Suburbs	3	54	34	9
West Suburbs	7	53	31	9
South Suburbs	--	--	--	--
Jewish engagement				
Personal	6	50	33	11
Participant	5	47	35	13
Holiday	8	53	27	12
Communal	2	41	37	20
Immersed	2	36	39	23
Lifestage				
Parent Pre-K	8	35	28	30
Parent K-12	4	38	40	18
Couple 22-39	2	31	40	27
Couple 40-69	2	51	37	10
Couple 70+	3	57	29	11
Single 22-39	4	30	41	25
Single 40-69	4	60	29	7
Single 70+	2	62	26	10
Multigenerational	7	42	36	15
Financial situation				
Struggling	13	49	28	10
Enough	2	50	32	16
Extra	2	43	38	17
Well-off	2	36	40	22

Question text: "Thinking about your personal support network – relatives and friends living nearby who you can rely on for help or support – how many people would you say you can rely on?"

CHAPTER 12.
IN THE WORDS OF COMMUNITY MEMBERS

This chapter summarizes the perspectives of the 2020 Metropolitan Chicago Jewish community study through the comments of community members. These responses reinforce the themes presented throughout the report and highlight the strengths and gaps in the community.

This chapter combines responses from over 3,000 survey participants to the following three questions:

1. Based on your own experience, what do you consider to be the strengths and gaps of the Metro Chicago-area Jewish community? (2,519 responses)
2. What gives the most satisfaction, joy, or meaning to your life as a Jewish person? (3,117 responses)
3. [For respondents who indicated that there were conditions that influenced their level of connection to the Metro Chicago Jewish community] Can you tell us more about those barriers to your connection to the Metro Chicago Jewish community? (414 responses)

Note that, as with all open-ended data in this report, the numbers shown here reflect the actual number of respondents who mentioned each theme in the report. These responses are not weighted to represent the full Jewish population. Some quotations have been edited for clarity or to preserve the anonymity of the respondent.

About the Metropolitan Chicago Jewish community

Community size

The Metropolitan Chicago Jewish community in 2020 includes 175,800 Jewish households containing 420,300 people, of whom 319,600 are Jewish. The community has experienced significant growth over the past decade. Since 2010, the number of Jewish households in Chicago increased by 19% and the number of Jews by 3%. The number of people living in Jewish households increased by 10%.

In total, 120 respondents commented positively on the community's size, citing the benefits of living in a large Jewish community. Many respondents noted with appreciation the community's ample resources.

> *The outreach seems strong. In a city the size of Chicago, seems like there are a lot of options for those who might wish to become more involved.*

> *The strengths are definitely its scope and size, I see a lot of innovation and new ways to connect with young people and expand the Jewish experience.*

> *The community is quite large, which means there is a decent selection of synagogues, kosher shopping/dining options, cultural and social opportunities, organizations, etc.*

Chicago has a very diverse Jewish community, both in types of congregations and racial make up. There is a synagogue here for any type of Jew. There are many ways to participate in Jewish-led or interfaith social action initiatives. I'm thinking immigrants' services and Black Lives Matter.

There are so many opportunities to "be Jewish." With so much choice, we are fortunate to live in an area where there are many Jews. Our strengths may also be contributing to our weaknesses with so much choice.

I find it interesting that you refer to a "Metro Chicago-area Jewish community" because I don't think of that as a community at all, but rather many Jewish individuals belonging to all kinds of groups. The strength is that there are so many available.

Other respondents saw the community's large size as a drawback (55), making it challenging to connect with others and to access services.

The Chicago Jewish community seems very segregated. There are not a lot of organizations that consistently cross boundaries between the different communities.

As the community grows, it is easy to get lost and lose an active connection to others.

Community unity

Opinions diverged on whether the Metropolitan Chicago Jewish community was a united community, with 296 respondents describing their feelings on the topic. Those who thought the community was unified (90) described a general sense of belonging and connectedness, sometimes attributing it to the institutions where they belonged or participated.

There seems to be more unity than many other communities, and a lot of cross talk between different sub-communities. The community is generally very welcoming.

[The] community comes together in hard times and stands united.

Other respondents (186) felt a unified community was lacking.

There is no Jewish community. There are organizations that do some work, but there is no community as it is. Different organizations solve various problems exactly because there is no community.

The strength is in the range of Jewish experiences offered here. The gap is the resulting splintering of the Jewish community. I do not feel a sense of solidarity; major silo[s] instead.

Of those who gave specific explanations for why they felt the community lacked unity, the most common source of division was religious affiliation (42). Those respondents either felt that there was not good communication between members of separate denominations, between observant and secular Jews, or between the Orthodox community and the rest of the community. However, many also expressed the desire for things to be more united.

There is very little interaction between the different sects of Judaism. It would be nice if all the denominations were more cohesive and not segregated.

Because the Jewish community is so large, I feel there is very little unity between Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, affiliated groups. In fact, even within the Orthodox community that I identify with, there is very little unity amongst the spectrum of Orthodox-affiliated groups.

It's really multiple communities. The Orthodox community is a separate entity from the non-Orthodox communities. So I really don't know much about the non-Orthodox communities…I do wish there was more interaction with other parts of the Jewish community.

Not enough interaction between the religious and non-religious Jews; more to the insularity of the religious. Some of this is due to the segregated nature of the groups and some to the "small" size of the relevant populations.

Supportive and welcoming

Many respondents (181) described the community as inclusive and accessible to members.

I feel the Chicago Jewish community offers aid and support to members of our community across gender and cultural lines, and I think the Jewish community efforts to help others in these unprecedented times has been remarkable.

I appreciate that we have a strong, caring Jewish community and that the community is committed to helping Jewish people in need. I have found it to be a friendly Jewish community.

However, others found the community to be the opposite (223), especially to newcomers and those who are less involved.

It seems as if the larger community is closed off to newcomers—especially older newcomers.

I've found it hard to connect with a new Jewish community. I can access the one from my childhood but not one that reflects my current beliefs and interests. I don't find the groups to be very welcoming. I want to increase my involvement in the community, but find it intimidating and not very welcoming.

The Metro Chicago-area Jewish community is somewhat closed. There are some people who are connected with the community, but they tend to be more well-off than those of us who are not connected. When there is outreach by organizations, it seems that those in the organizations only make a cursory attempt to get to know you, and then they push for donations to attend events or become more involved. As a result, I have not made an effort to become connected to the community.

I find the Chicago Jewish community to be unfriendly, unwelcoming of newcomers, and cliquish. People do not reach out and, even when approached (e.g., talking to clergy at temple, being new to a temple, etc.), people make little effort to encourage your attendance or to welcome you.

Geography

Proximity to institutions and the density of the Jewish population can affect participation and feelings of connection. Despite abundant resources and communal institutions in Metropolitan Chicago, many respondents felt that there were not enough resources in their respective regions. Respondents frequently mentioned the separation between city and suburban life and the uneven distribution of resources and services between the suburban areas. The Western Suburbs were the most frequently cited geographic area for lack of resources (64), followed by the South Suburbs (33).

The Metro Chicago-area Jewish community is very strong, but where I have lived (South suburbs) Jewish services are harder to come by, since there are declining numbers of Jews here.

We have wonderful services and organizations, but they are focused solely on the traditional Jewish areas of the city and North Shore. We feel very unsupported in the Western suburbs.

Being Jewish is essential to who I am but, after moving to the western suburbs having grown up in the northern suburbs, I see a huge difference in the services and opportunities that Jewish organizations offer out here. I understand the population is smaller, but it is growing.

Geography also made it difficult, in some cases, for respondents to connect with fellow Jews outside their area.

Different neighborhoods are very disjointed from each other. The [city] Jewish community is very strong and interconnected across denominations in a wonderful way. But we are not well connected to the communities in other neighborhoods in the city or in the suburbs really at all.

Demographic diversity

Various demographic groups expressed particular needs and/or concerns related to their participation in the local Jewish community.

Children and families

Altogether, 109 respondents mentioned specific concerns related to children and families. Respondents remarked that there were many programming options and that they were pleased with the quantity of options available. However, many families were eager for more.

I'm able to find lots of programming for young kids! There are also many options for Jewish day cares, preschools, and camps. I would love if there was a trip to Israel like Birthright for couples or young families. I would also love more volunteer activities that young kids can do.

With young children, appreciate having activities close—I guess less of an issue since COVID, our congregation was just starting neighborhood groups, and we unfortunately had to stop. Also appreciated having a jBaby activities in the neighborhood I used to go to.

I will say one of my favorite activities this year was a jBaby online book group where we discussed the book White Kids and issues of racial justice in parenting. I think events for parenting which aren't just about creating an experience for the kids (important too!), but how Judaism informs parenting is something I want more on.

If we survive the pandemic and return to being able to gather, it would be nice if there were more regularly scheduled local activities for families with children. As opposed to random or sporadic events, it would be great to see an organization like the JUF help local groups establish regularly scheduled gatherings that help families with children learn, grow, celebrate, pray, and play together. During the pandemic, perhaps there could be on-line gatherings (although, I recognize it's more difficult to develop and pilot such programs on-line).

[I want] more opportunities to connect with young Jewish families in smaller settings that are in close proximity to each other.

Young adults

A total of 105 respondents commented on the experiences and role of young and/or single adults, especially with regard to programmatic offerings (30) and Jewish identity (20). Respondents appreciated the quality of programming and ability to meet one another and/or learn about involvement in Jewish Chicago.

> *It can be hard to be part of the Jewish community if you're not from Metro Chicago. Thankfully, there are a ton of programs for young people to meet each other and be part of the community.*

> *[I] really appreciate the number of opportunities available to young people, especially when they were in person.*

However, some respondents felt the programming was lacking in several areas.

> *There remain large gaps in the types of community offerings for young Jewish professionals in Chicago—the growing segment of post-college, pre-children Jews in urban Chicago.*

> *Lack of social programming for young Jewish adults who are not college students or interested in Jewish issues. Ideally would like to see sports, hiking, and social and cultural activities.*

> *I've been in Chicago for 17 years and have yet to find a true group of Jewish friends/resources for me. There are very little groups/activities for young adults like me (mid 30s) who aren't married and/or don't have kids.*

> *As a young adult, the community can feel exclusive and doesn't always feel welcoming—particularly if you are not from the area. As an older single adult, there are not as many appealing events or activities that are for people with shared interests. In late 30s-early 40s, for those that don't have kids, there should be more than just an annual solicitation for a pledge or gift to the Federation.*

Some older respondents expressed support for outreach to the young adult segment of the community.

> *More effort must be put into getting the younger Jews to be interested in finding each other. The intermarriage rate is terrifying.*

Older adults

A number of respondents (68) focused on the experiences of elderly members of the Jewish community. Although some listed senior services as a strength, most comments (49) were negative. These respondents noted a lack of adequate social services or programmatic offerings, in terms of quality and quantity.

> *The major gap has been the cutback of innovative outreach to seniors by both synagogues and [organizations]…Just when seniors have reached a point in their lives when they're no longer working, it seems there are fewer programs which they can participate in.*

> *As a senior citizen who is widowed, I have found it difficult to find a peer group and affordable synagogues to attend.*

> *Maybe more education on choosing where to live as you age. We did a lot of research before deciding whether we would and then where would we go in terms of senior housing. Not everyone can afford*

six-figure admission fees or have the ability to think through options regarding affordability. Related are programs for the adult children of the elderly, helping them come to terms with what is happening to Mom and Dad.

I'd like to see more support for the ARK. As an older single adult, I need more social experiences that aren't traditionally for 'old people.'

Intermarried families

Intermarried respondents described challenges in finding their place within Jewish organizations. Forty-one respondents discussed their perceptions of being excluded from the community.

Since I am not Jewish, at certain events I have felt extremely excluded…it's difficult to build interfaith relationships and alliances with other organizations if your Jewish community is so strongly against anyone perceived to be an "other."

My [spouse] is Christian, and while I have worked most of my adult life for [a Jewish organization] in some capacity, I have never felt very welcomed by the mainstream community.

I think a large gap is how to serve more families like mine that are interfaith and how to make it easier for people looking to convert to Judaism.

Would like to see a bigger push to include my adult children who have married non-Jewish spouses. Not enough inclusiveness for mixed marriages and their offspring, to keep them feeling Jewish.

LGBTQ

Five percent of Jewish adults identify as LGBTQ, and 9% of Jewish households have a member who identifies as LGBTQ (who may or may not be Jewish). Eighteen respondents discussed the importance of inclusion for the LGBTQ community members. They indicated that the overall community was generally safe and accepting but that it sometimes lacked inclusive programming and institutional support for LGBTQ Jewish spaces.

The Jewish community is very tight knit, but there is a lot of lack of understanding and Jewish-related services for the LGBTQ community including services outside of one synagogue in Chicago.

Jewish services should become better educated about queer issues and exhibit more support to the LGBTQIA+ community.

People of color

Seven percent of Jewish households include someone who identifies as a person of color, and 2% of Jewish adults identify as a person of color. Respondents who provided comments on this topic (24) noted that the Jewish community had more work to do on being inclusive and welcoming to Jews of color and their families.

I…think many Jewish organizations (like most secular orgs.) have a hard time integrating Jews from non-white and/or non-Ashkenazi backgrounds.

I don't wish to engage in many in-person events…I'm constantly bothered or given the 'Jew Test' because of my skin color.

Financial burdens of Jewish life

Altogether, 176 people specifically cited affordability as a problem in the Jewish community. The vast majority of those who cited specific expenses were concerned about the high cost of Jewish education and synagogue membership. In addition, 42 respondents reported financial constraints that limited their participation in Jewish life.

> *While we are able to afford to participate in Jewish life, the cost of participation in things like synagogue membership, social events, Jewish summer camp/youth group membership, etc...are financially exclusionary. Being Jewish in Chicago (and more generally in America) is a class-based experience which systematically excludes people with fewer financial resources. It is a long-term problem which must change, or people will depart public Jewish life, and they will not return.*

> *The cost of being a member prohibits even those of us that would volunteer or contribute 'in kind' from being part of the community.*

Cost of Jewish education

The high cost of Jewish education as a barrier to community participation was mentioned by 41 respondents.

> *Jewish day school and day care are very high quality but an unsustainable financial burden on families.*

> *Early childhood education is incredibly expensive. To send [children] to Jewish preschool is incredibly challenging. Now that we are looking at camps for my [child], I'm shocked that prices for Jewish [day] camp are also so expensive. Given that I'm an older parent with young children, I'm faced with the choice of educating my children in a Jewish environment or making necessary retirement savings.*

> *Day school tuition is very expensive. I feel as though I work to pay tuition, and it does not leave much time for other Jewish activities.*

> *The support provided for Jewish day schools is wildly insufficient to support a system of affordable, accessible day school education for the number of people who desire it… While the Federation does support day schools alongside many other institutions, the scale of investment is not nearly enough to make it affordable.*

Cost of synagogue membership

A common frustration expressed by respondents was the expense of synagogue memberships and barrier this expense poses to entry. Of those who were unable able to afford dues, some were reluctant to ask for financial assistance.

> *I think the cost of belonging is steep and can be off putting especially for someone who doesn't have long deep ties…I still really struggle to be able to share our financial stress or ask for help. I want to be a contributing member, but that is not financially feasible for my family right now.*

> *Many households can't afford synagogue dues but are embarrassed to ask for special rates. So they just don't join…Cost shouldn't be a deciding factor to belonging.*

Joining a temple is way too expensive for a middle class family. We are not eligible for aid and being a member and paying for Hebrew school/ bar mitzvah education is unreasonably expensive.

Those without the means to donate to their synagogue also reported feeling that they were not valued as members.

The Jewish community and synagogues cater to the affluent.

Synagogues feel more like 'businesses' than places of worship for the benefit of all.

Jewish life

Synagogue life

Twenty-six percent of Jewish households in Metropolitan Chicago belong to a synagogue or another Jewish worship community. Many respondents (118) were pleased with the strength of synagogues in Chicago generally, and members had good connections with their respective synagogues.

I appreciate the temple I occasionally attend, and their very welcoming policy to non-affiliated and to religions other than Jewish. Those two factors are key to me.

I am very happy with the community at our synagogue…For the first time in my life I have a small group of Jewish friends and feel I have a Jewish community.

A similar number of respondents (115) had trouble finding a synagogue or other worship group that suited them or their families.

[The Chicago community] is very synagogue-centric. There aren't a wide variety of less traditional spiritual communities.

There is a lack of options…I would prefer to belong to a humanistic synagogue with a full-time rabbi, but there isn't one in the area.

For some respondents, the synagogue was the center of their Jewish life. They felt strongly connected to their own synagogue but not to the larger Chicago Jewish community.

I feel a connection with my particular congregation but do not feel a sense of community with the greater Metro Chicago Jewish community. I actually never even thought about such a connection.

Jewish programs and activities

A total of 269 respondents specifically discussed programs that were offered by Chicago Jewish institutions. Close to half of those respondents (129) considered the offerings to be strong.

I lived in NYC for [many] years and what I didn't like about the community was there was no coordination between the Jewish organizations. I think the Chicago Jewish community maintaining a calendar to ensure limiting too many events on the same night is a huge bonus.

I love the social interactions and friendships that I have made with many in the ten years I have been associated with[my synagogue]. I enjoy the fun events like Pesach seders, onegs, and High Holidays.

Some respondents (138) suggested improvements, including specific types of programs they would like to see added.

[I] wanted to participate more, especially with young children events, but many things including holiday events, volunteering options, Jbaby classes and social get-togethers just haven't worked for our schedules…I wish there was more in or near [my community] for very young children.

My father's side of the family is Jewish and outside of his temple, we haven't had much experience with other congregations. We have checked out a few due to Jbaby events, but it would be great if there was a Jewish 101 type program for people who weren't bar/bat mitzvahs. I'm a pretty outgoing person, but feeling like I don't know enough, I'm afraid to say/do something that might make me stick out even more.

I'm looking for egalitarian, liberal but not too hippy dippy Jewish programming for my family and specifically my toddler.

Politics

Politics, domestic and related to Israel, are divisive in the Chicago Jewish community. A total of 217 respondents mentioned the role of politics in Jewish life. Some respondents described partisan politics that alienate those who have a minority viewpoint.

When we participate in congregational services and activities that meet our religious needs, we often do not feel comfortable with a lot of the politics.

Various Jewish institutions in Metro Chicago have become very politically partisan…I am more than ready to help my fellow Jews in need, but will only do so through institutions that keep out of partisan politics.

The Jewish population in this area only support and accept one political view. Anyone else is an outsider and unwelcome. It is uncomfortable, and I find it difficult to make connections and retain friendships and find support in a community that is so strongly one sided.

A significant number of respondents (159) felt their personal political views were unwelcome, and that this reality was a barrier to participation.

I feel isolated from the very religious community that I grew up with because of their political views.

Open political conversations are not welcomed. We no longer appreciate political differences and are intolerant of views that do not fit with our worldviews.

Politically conservative views are not well tolerated at many synagogues or other Jewish spaces. Merely trying to make space for people with political views like mine is a challenge.

There are parts of the mainstream Chicago Jewish community that do not accept socialist, non-Zionist, or anti-Zionist political views, despite the fact that those views are deeply rooted in my Judaism.

Differing views about Israel were a particular source of tension (90) for the community. People from different points on the political spectrum perceived the community as being hostile to their views on Israel.

Some respondents were concerned about declining community support for Israel.

Metro Chicago-area Jewish community must support state of Israel as sole democratic state in the Middle East region.

When it is safe to gather together again, we would love to see more events in support of Israel, especially on Yom Ha'atzmaut. You need to restart something along the lines of the Walk with Israel—a community event that gets people out to support Israel, engages them with Israel culturally, brings the Jewish community together. This has really been lacking over the past five years.

Others felt that their critical views of Israel were not welcome in Jewish organizations.

There is much resistance to criticism of Israeli government policy and/or actions. Our family is staunchly Zionist, but we are troubled by actions of the current Israeli government (just as we have affection for the USA while being troubled by the actions of our government). That said, both within our synagogue, and more so within the mainstream and leadership of the Chicago Jewish community, criticism of Israeli policy and actions is most unwelcome.

If anything, more needs to be done to reassure Jews that it is possible—and completely acceptable—to be pro-Israel and a Democrat, whether left or center-left.

We need to stop having litmus tests and sticking to the same tired lines about 'support for Israel,' 'fighting BDS. It's not working—not for us Jews, and not for our neighbors. Just as we don't appreciate having litmus tests applied to United States in political spaces, we should not have litmus tests for our own, or who we should engage with.

The mainstream Jewish community makes me, as a Jew who supports Palestine, feel unwelcome.

Leadership in the community does not recognize or reflect that a large portion of the Jewish community, especially the younger members, are critical of many Israeli policies and are much more liberal in their leanings than leadership itself…viewpoints expressed by the 'organized' leadership of the community are often out of step with the majority of the community members.

Joy and meaning in Jewish life

Respondents were asked what gives them the most satisfaction, joy, or meaning as a Jewish person. The most common response by far was experiences with their family (1,058).

We have a good life, friends in our community. But the greatest joy is to see how our love of the Jewish faith has passed down to our children and grandchildren. Although the level of observance maybe different among us, we share the basic ethics of Jewish life and hope that our grandchildren pass this on to future generations.

Shabbat/holidays built family cohesion, and it has remained that way, even as children leave the house and build new households of their own.

When all my children and grandchildren join me via FaceTime for candle lighting on Friday night.

Being able to engage my children in the Jewish community and raise them with Jewish traditions, values, etc.

Watching my daughter grow up with a good and strong neshama *and attending a Jewish day school.*

A sense of identity and a connection to the past. [My relatives] were not much for religion, but they were Holocaust survivors…Even though they didn't observe much, their entire identity was bound up in being Jewish. It's meaningful to me that, as the [parent of Jewish children], I am continuing the historical, cultural, and (to some extent) religious connections that I experienced with my grandparents.

I am constantly impressed with my children's connection to the Jewish community, hearing them recite prayers and watching them understand the meaning of holidays and the connection they feel to their Jewish identity always makes me smile and feel fulfilled.

Many respondents (528) described pride in their Jewish identity.

It is my essential identity. I am a Jew…It is meaningful to have this exclusive identity, so rich in history, so rich in cultural camaraderie, and so meaningful to me to be a part of it. It's like a mindset of 'if you know, you know.'

Being Jewish makes me feel like I have something special about me to offer to the world. I'm grateful to have rich culture to immerse myself in throughout the year that I can share with others.

I have a lot of pride in my Judaism and, sadly, with the rise of antisemitism I have had to defend it a lot. I think continuing to educate myself so I am equipped to fight these battles has reconnected me to my faith and given me even more satisfaction and joy to being Jewish.

Other respondents (408) said they valued their connections to the Jewish people, locally and globally.

I love the connection I feel when I meet another Jew. It is something I feel in my gut…We just know each other.

[I feel joyful because] knowing that, as I move through the secular world, I have an 'inner-ring' Jewish community, both here at home (personally) and throughout the world (theoretically).

Holiday celebrations, especially with family and community, were mentioned by 370 respondents.

Gathering with friends and family for Jewish lifecycle events as well as holidays. Knowing that the traditions I was raised with then talk to my children, and they will continue to practice them. Maintaining Jewish values and passing them down to my children.

During holidays (High Holidays, Pesach, Sukkot, etc.) that Jews around the world are celebrating at the same time (with time differences) that I am, and that I am carrying on the customs and celebrations that my parents, grandparents, great grandparents and the rest of my ancestors have celebrated for several thousand years. I feel a part of that continuum and hope that my children will follow me in the same way, though that seems somewhat doubtful, and that makes me very sad.

Other respondents (304) linked Jewish culture to a sense of joy.

Growing up with a strong Jewish cultural background in a largely Jewish population was empowering. I enjoy sharing these traditions and the Jewish culture with my children and appreciate the community they are growing up in as they will never need to feel like the minority.

Belonging to and participating in a long-lasting rich culture that has had a profound influence on world civilization. I feel very deeply connected to Jewish ideas and classic texts.

Many respondents (301) found joy and pride through their history and heritage.

> *My history—knowing that so many generations before me practiced and believed what I do now. Knowing a bit of Yiddish helps me feel connected to my parents (who are gone) and the challenges my grandfather endured in the Russian pogroms of the early 1900s.*

> *I am very proud of my Jewish heritage. Being the granddaughter of Holocaust survivors is a very powerful feeling, and I share my family's story with whomever wants to know. It has also made me a strong proponent for equality for all, in all areas of life. There is no room for hate in this world, yet there is too much of it. It breaks my heart.*

The joy of maintaining traditions was a source of meaning for others (293).

> *Passing on family traditions, related to holidays and lifecycle events to the new generation.*

> *I love the rich history, the beautiful traditions, and the values I associate with being a Jew. I have a deep commitment to doing my part to make the world a better place, which aligns with my Jewish identity. I appreciate that Jews are taught to ask questions and strive to learn and understand.*

> *The richness of our history and traditions, feeling connected to my family through Jewish observances and culture even though we are separated by geography (and COVID), advocating for social justice tikkun olam.*

Similar numbers found joy in their study of Torah and Jewish text (246) and meaning in efforts focused on social justice and tikkun olam (225).

> *When I converted to Judaism as an adult, I felt my spiritual identity was finally complete. I became part of* klal Israel*, and the rest of my life would be devoted to the study of Torah and observance to carrying out mitzvot to the best of my ability.*

> *Studying text with family and friends grounds me in understanding my obligations to the world around me. My Jewish community and friends are the ones I turn to for big questions and to join together for inspiration and action to make the world a better place.*

> *I love seeing the political groups that promote tikkun olam and how we stick up for other minorities. We know what it is like to be discriminated against and stick up for others—like we have to stick up for ourselves. As a religious minority, we have to make more of an effort to stay Jewish than those who practice the majority religion in this country.*

> *Despite not engaging much in Jewish practices (attending services, observing holidays, etc.), being Jewish does feel very important to me from a political and philosophical standpoint. Judaism to me means a commitment to equity and justice, and a commitment to reflecting, questioning, and challenging. I 'practice' Judaism by trying to embody these principles.*

Other themes mentioned by respondents included the importance of synagogue (218) and local community (210).

> *Feeling a part of a community with my synagogue, which is why we still belong.*

> *My synagogue is a very important part of my social, religious, and volunteer life.*

> *Making genuine, deep, and long-lasting relationships that are rooted in Jewish values and heritage.*

Having a community. Within this community, having friendships going back to when I was a child, as well as more recent friendships that are deepening. And, having the opportunity to explore my faith through my temple and through a multi-faith book group to which I belong.

Many respondents mentioned spirituality, their relationship to God (181), prayer (113), and their observance of Jewish rituals (180) as sources of joy.

In my relation to God, praying, learning Torah and doing all commandments incumbent on me. Between myself and my fellow man, it's also fulfilling the many commandments that the Torah mandates, such as loving your fellow man, giving charity, holding back from speaking anything derogatory about another person. And sharing many events such as Shabbos and Yom Tov with our family. Getting married and raising a family. All of these combined, and many more things, give much joy and meaning to me as a Jew.

My focus is on spirituality over religion. I get great satisfaction from helping people on their spiritual journeys, but it is not the religion that matters, and I work with people of all faiths or none. If a person who comes to me is Jewish I am glad to help them, but that they are Jewish only incidental. It is their relationship to God and their journey of lech lecha*, going to themselves, on which I focus. I am trained and immersed in Judaism, so most of my teachings and the stories I tell when working with people are Jewish, but only because it is what I have spent time with. I love and enjoy many of the rituals of Judaism, because they are mine, but Judaism is no better than any other path.*

The way Judaism provides a framework through which I live my entire life. While not ritually observant, I think about Judaism a lot throughout the day. It gives me ways to rejoice in good times and find comfort in hard times. Judaism brings me rituals and ways to celebrate and observe—formally or informally—throughout my daily life and cyclical year.

Connection to something larger than myself through ritual and narrative, connection to my family and ancestors, holiday celebrations, and pride in our texts.

Celebrating holidays with family and passing that ritual to my children.

I find comfort in saying prayers every morning, and in saying blessings over my food.

Morning minyan, connecting on Shabbat.

A number of respondents (164) found joy and pride in their connection to the State of Israel.

Having the State of Israel in our days is our living miracle.

Visiting Israel—seeing how Israel is a light unto the nations and a real protector of Jews throughout the world.

REVISION HISTORY

Revised 01/25/2022

1. Revised Table 1.10 and preceding paragraph.
2. Revised Figure 9.1 to include "Don't Know" Category.
3. Added new Table 10.13.
4. Added new Table 10.14.