



# Jewish Chicago: Who We Are

A POPULATION STUDY



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.

*This year's study was conducted by NORC at the University of Chicago and Brandeis University's Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies. The study was funded in part by generous grants from the Crown Family Philanthropies, Michael Reese Health Trust, the Walder Foundation, and the Jewish Federations of North America Research Benchmarking Project, with support from the Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation.*

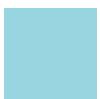
## Jewish Chicago in focus:



Our community continues to be strong, stable and growing



Recognizing the growing diversity of our community



Exploring how our community engages in Jewish life today



Identifying emergent community needs



The Chicago Jewish community  
is **STRONG, STABLE** and **GROWING**.



# 175,800

**JEWISH HOUSEHOLDS**

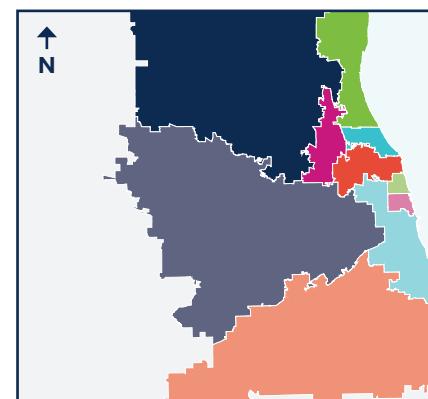
↑ 19% since 2010

Jewish households are defined as having at least one person who identifies as Jewish.

**420,300** People in a Jewish household | ↑ 10% since 2010

**319,600** Total Jews | ↑ 3% since 2010

**3 out of 4 children** in Jewish households are considered by their parents to be Jewish in some way. 20% are considered to have no religion and 5% another religion.



■ Far NW Suburbs	■ W Suburbs
■ N Suburbs Lake	■ City Far N
■ Near NW Suburbs	■ City N
■ N Suburbs Cook	■ City Other
■ Near N Suburbs	■ S Suburbs

## GEOGRAPHY

The largest percentage of Jewish households and individuals reside in **City North**, followed by the **Near North suburbs**.

About half of Jewish adults living in the **Metropolitan Chicago area** were born there—33% were born elsewhere in the U.S. and the remainder were born in another country including 9% in Russia, 1% in Israel, and 1% in Canada.



## Recognizing the **DIVERSITY** of our community



The number of interfaith families in our community is growing—inclusive programs continue to engage these families in Jewish life.

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**Nearly three out of every four Jewish adults in Chicago are either married or partnered.**

Among married and partnered adults, two-thirds are inmarried, and one-third are intermarried—up from 20% in 2010.

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### DIVERSITY BY HOUSEHOLD

**7%** of households include at least one person who self-identifies as a **person of color**. Although only 2% of Jewish adults are persons of color, that proportion increases to 7% of Jewish children.

**14%** of households include someone who identifies as **non-white or Hispanic**, which is up from 4% in 2010.

**9%** of households include at least one person who identifies as **LGBTQ**.



## Exploring how our community ENGAGES IN JEWISH LIFE today



### RELIGIOUS LIFE



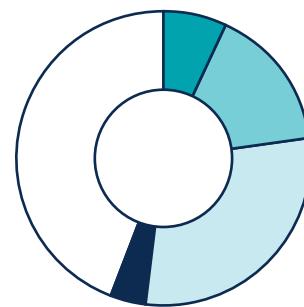
**During the pandemic, when many were homebound, 2 in 5 Jewish adults made changes in their religious life.**

14% of Jewish adults increased their engagement, such as observing Shabbat or attending services more often, while 26% decreased their participation.

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**Following national trends, a large percentage of Jewish adults (44%) do not affiliate with a denomination.**

26% of households belong to some type of Jewish congregation—down more than 25% from 2010. Notably, individuals who identify with a particular denomination do not necessarily belong to congregations that align with that denomination.



Orthodox: 7%  
Conservative: 16%  
Reform: 29%  
Other: 4%  
No denomination: 44%

### CHARITABLE GIVING

**80%**

of Jewish households engage in **philanthropic giving**. Half of households made at least one donation to a Jewish organization in the past year.



# 42%

of Jewish adults **feel somewhat or very connected** to the local Jewish community; a larger proportion of local Jews feel connected to the worldwide community (60%).

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## CELEBRATING JEWISH IDENTITY

The majority of Jewish adults feel that **remembering the Holocaust, working for justice and equality and leading an ethical and moral life** are essential parts of being Jewish. Based on responses to dozens of questions, five categories were identified that describe patterns of participation in Jewish life in our community:

- Personal:** 27% of all Jewish adults participate occasionally in some aspects of Jewish life and tend to engage much more in home-based activities.
- Communal:** 21% of Jewish adults are highly involved in home, ritual, and organizational behaviors.
- Holiday:** 19% of Jewish adults are highly involved in home and ritual behaviors.
- Immersed:** 19% of Jewish adults, are highly involved in all elements of Jewish life.
- Participant:** 13% of Jewish adults have high levels of participation in Jewish programs and moderate participation in other elements of Jewish life.

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Among Jewish young adults under 40, **40% of couples and 41% of singles participated in a program sponsored by a Jewish young adult organization** such as Hillel, OneTable, Base and Moishe House.



## ANTISEMITISM

The majority of Jewish adults are deeply concerned about antisemitism both around the world and in the U.S. **7% reported that they were personally a victim of antisemitism** in the past year.

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## ISRAEL



**2 out of 3 Jewish adults are somewhat to very emotionally attached to Israel.** The level of attachment to Israel has declined slightly since 2010, when 36% were somewhat attached, and 41% were very attached.

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# 60%

of Chicago Jews **have been to Israel**—up 10% from 2010 and substantially higher than U.S. Jews in general, reflecting the impact of Birthright, IsraelNow and similar programs that bring young people to Israel.

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## JEWISH EDUCATION

**31%** of preschool-aged Jewish children **attend a Jewish-run early childhood program.**

**38%** of Jewish children grades k-12 **were enrolled in some form of Jewish school** during the 2020-21 school year.

**39%** of Jewish children **have never participated** in any Jewish schooling.



## Identifying emergent **COMMUNITY NEEDS**



Though there is great hope on the horizon, intensified community needs resulting from the pandemic will continue for some time.

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**1 in 5 households are struggling to make ends meet.**  
Of Jewish households that are struggling, 59% reported their financial situation had gotten worse since the pandemic.

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**18%** of Jewish households include at least one person whose work, school or general activities are limited by a chronic health issue, disability or special need.

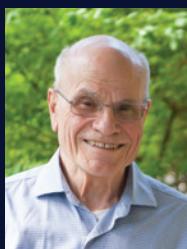
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**The greatest single service need is for mental health—**  
24% of Jewish households with a health issue needed these services in the past six months. The need for mental health services is significantly higher among young adults ages 22-39.

## **ABOUT THE STUDY**

Data were collected between October 2020 and January 2021 via web and telephone surveys. Households were selected at random—3,877 main sample completed surveys, with an additional 1,755 completes from a supplemental sample contacted by email only.

The high number of completes supports estimates for an increased number of geographic areas in the Chicago metro area and improves the quality of estimates for key subgroups within the Jewish community.



*In memory of Dr. Peter B. Friedman (1943-2019),  
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 critical  
tool which has become integral to understanding our  
community and meeting its evolving needs.*