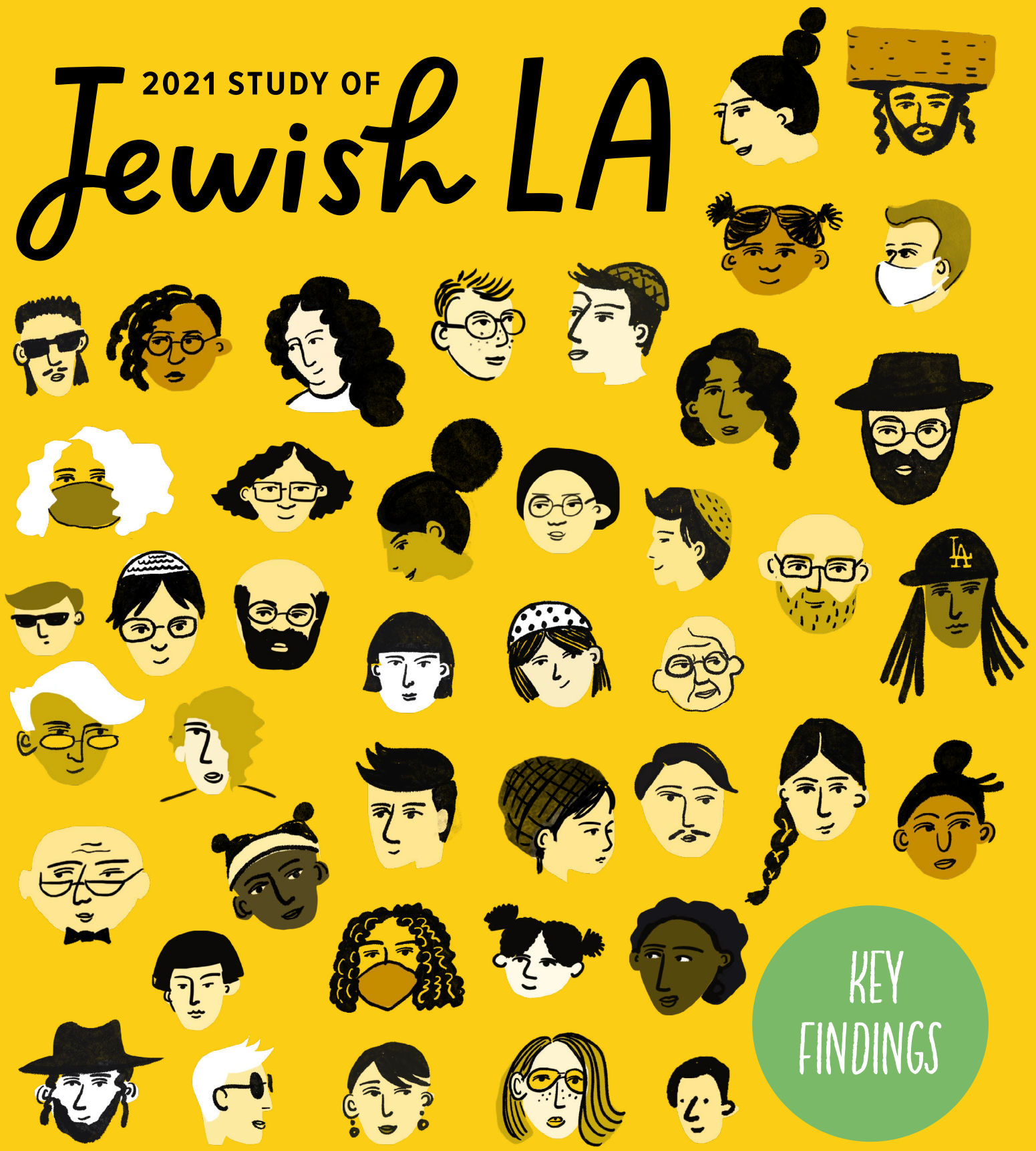


2021 STUDY OF *Jewish* LA



KEY
FINDINGS

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NORC at the
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Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies (CMJS)
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2021 STUDY OF *Jewish* LA

**Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies (CMJS) at
Brandeis University and NORC at the University of Chicago**

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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.

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www.brandeis.edu/cmjs/community-studies/los-angeles-report.html



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On behalf of the Jewish Federation of Greater Los Angeles, we are excited to share with you the Study of Jewish Los Angeles. It's a portrait of our unique LA Jewish community and will help us chart paths forward as we strive to create the most inclusive, vibrant, and welcoming place for all.

The design of this study began with dozens of conversations with diverse community members from across our expansive region with the goal of ensuring the study's findings would be relevant and valuable for the broadest audience. This means that The Study of Jewish LA reflects all of us, each one of us in all our diversity and strength as one people.

We are extremely grateful to our key funders for making the Study of Jewish LA a reality: Jewish Federation of Greater Los Angeles, Cedars Sinai, Jewish Community Foundation of Los Angeles, Diane and Guilford Glazer Foundation Fund of the Jewish Community Foundation, and Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert Foundation. They not only provided the financial resources to design and carry out an exceptional research study; they also offered insightful feedback and guidance that made the study better than if any one of us had done it alone. Their unwavering support and thoughtful contributions to the process have proven invaluable. Spearheading this effort for Federation, we are indebted to Dr. Shira Rosenblatt, Associate Chief Program Officer, for leading the Study of Jewish LA and ensuring the highest level of rigor coupled with genuine curiosity and a collaborative spirit.

Together, we want to express our deep gratitude and appreciation for our research team composed of academics from two pre-eminent research institutions: the Maurice and Marilyn Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies (CMJS) at Brandeis University and NORC at the University of Chicago. This dynamic team, led by Dr. Janet Aronson and Professor Leonard Saxe at Brandeis, and Dr. Zachary Seeskin and Dr. David Dutwin at NORC, merged the Cohen Center's unparalleled experience conducting over 25 Jewish community studies over the last two decades with NORC's expertise in the most advanced methodologies. We appreciate their partnership in this work as they led us with integrity and rigor.

Over the course of the next several months and beyond, we encourage all organizations, large and small, key stakeholders, and interested community members and leaders to help us ensure these data are used and applied for the betterment of our community. Together, we will make meaning, ask new questions, and strive to understand deeply the diverse faces, outlooks, perspectives, cultures, and practices that make up our colorful Jewish LA.



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Marvin Schotland

We designed this study to be accessible, action-oriented, and inclusive. We sought to create reports that focus on key themes, incorporating illustrative survey quotes to add voices to the numbers. Each brings a fresh analysis of the data in the hope of stimulating community members to ask new questions, engage in strategy conversations, and consider the implications for our community. These thematic reports are intended to act as a starting point and designed to spark curiosity. Over the next years, we will mine these data and engage in deep conversation to better understand their implications. We will also gather new data as we think of intriguing questions whose answers will enable us to evolve and grow.

Please begin your exploration of the reports with Key Findings and LA by the Numbers. These two reports describe the overarching findings of the study that will guide our work in the years ahead and serve as a foundation and context for the rest of the reports. For more in-depth discussions of each topic, please enjoy the topic-specific reports. With these findings in hand, Federation looks forward to utilizing the data, in collaboration with our partners, to refine priorities and strategies for our future. Thank you for being on this journey with us.

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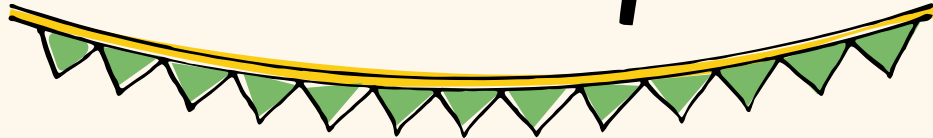
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design, data collection, and
crafting of the reports.

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Zoe Design Works

*A special thanks to the 3,767 survey respondents
whose participation made the study possible.*

In This Report



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Introduction

The 2021 Study of Jewish LA paints a portrait of a large and diverse community. Greater Los Angeles is home to the second largest Jewish community in the United States. The community is diverse, and Jewish Angelenos not only differ demographically by age, gender, where they live, and whether or not they are partnered and/or have children, but also in terms of ethnicity, birthplace, race, languages spoken at home, and how long they have lived in Los Angeles.

There is also substantial diversity in the Jewish identities and practices of LA Jews. Some identify as Jewish by religion, some as Jewish by ethnicity and, among those who identify as Jewish, the ways they express and think about their Jewish identity vary widely. Many Jewish households also include non-Jewish partners and children.

The present study was conducted by a team of researchers at the Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies at Brandeis University and NORC at the University of Chicago. The study employed innovative state-of-the-art methods to create a comprehensive description of the characteristics, attitudes, and behaviors of members of the Jewish community in Greater Los Angeles.

The present study provides a snapshot of the LA Jewish community during 2021, more than one year into the COVID-19 pandemic. Although some survey responses were likely influenced by the unique situation created by the pandemic, questions were designed to capture stable characteristics of the community. The survey questionnaire was developed by CMJS in consultation with

Jewish Federation of Greater Los Angeles (JFGLA) to reflect communal priorities. As necessary, questions were modified to account for changes in usual patterns of behavior during the pandemic.

This study is based on analysis of a rich set of data collected from 3,767 eligible households between June and September 2021. Survey respondents were randomly selected from all households in the Los Angeles catchment area (see map). The study design integrated an Address Based Sample (ABS) with known households on Jewish organizational lists. Households were contacted by mail, email, and telephone, and invited to complete the survey online or by telephone. Responses were statistically weighted to represent all LA Jewish households. The response rates for the main sample were 11.2% unweighted and 10.2% weighted (see Technical Appendix for details).

This report begins with an overview of some of the key findings of the study, including community size and demographics. Some of the most important themes that emerged from the study are described in the remainder of this report.



Additional reports on subjects including diversity, children, Israel, Jewish engagement, antisemitism, and well-being are available at:

www.brandeis.edu/cmjs/community-studies/los-angeles-report.html
and
studyofjewishla.org

The principal goal of this study is to promote an understanding of the community and to aid strategic planning, program development, and policies to support and enhance Jewish life

HOW TO READ THIS REPORT

AS YOU READ THIS REPORT, KEEP IN MIND THE FOLLOWING:

TERMS: Unless otherwise specified, references to “all Jewish adults” or “all Jewish households” refer to Jewish adults and Jewish households in Los Angeles.

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.

RESPONSES: Information in this report is based on over 3,700 survey responses. Responses to survey questions are often subjective and reflect respondents’ interpretation of survey questions. Data presented in this report reflect an estimate of the distribution of responses to a particular question if every member of the community had been interviewed.

ESTIMATES: Because estimates are based on a probability survey, no one estimate should be considered an exact measurement. As a guideline, 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 necessarily reflect true differences in the population.

When a percentage is between 0% and 0.5% and would otherwise round down to 0%, the number is denoted as < 1%. When there are insufficient respondents in a particular subgroup for reporting reliable information, the estimate is shown as “—”.

COMPARISONS ACROSS SUBGROUPS: 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. Unless otherwise specified, all tables in this report that compare subgroups reflect some significant difference. However, 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, as a rule of thumb, differences between any two numbers of less than 10 percentage points may not reflect true differences in the population.

QUOTES in this report may have been edited for clarity and to protect privacy. While representing an individual experience, the quotes illustrate the themes identified in the numeric data.



Each report brings a fresh analysis of the data in the hope of stimulating community members to ask new questions, engage in strategy conversations, and consider the implications for our community. These thematic reports are intended to act as a starting point and designed to spark curiosity.

RABBI NOAH FARKAS, PRESIDENT AND CEO
JEWISH FEDERATION OF GREATER LOS ANGELES

Community Portrait

COMMUNITY SIZE

As of 2021, it is estimated that the Los Angeles catchment area is the home to nearly 300,000 Jewish households. These households include almost 740,000 individuals, of whom 564,700 are Jewish. Approximately 8% of all residents¹ of the catchment area are Jewish, and 11.3% of all households include at least one Jewish adult. The geographic boundaries of the catchment area are described to the right.

Over the last quarter century, the number of Jews in Los Angeles increased by about 9%.² During that same time period, the total number of people in Jewish households grew by 25%. The dramatic increase in the total number of people in Jewish households is due to the growing number of non-Jewish individuals and is related, in part, to rising rates of intermarriage.

JEWISH POPULATION ESTIMATES OF LA, 2021

CONSIDER THIS

Total number of people in Jewish households grew by

25%

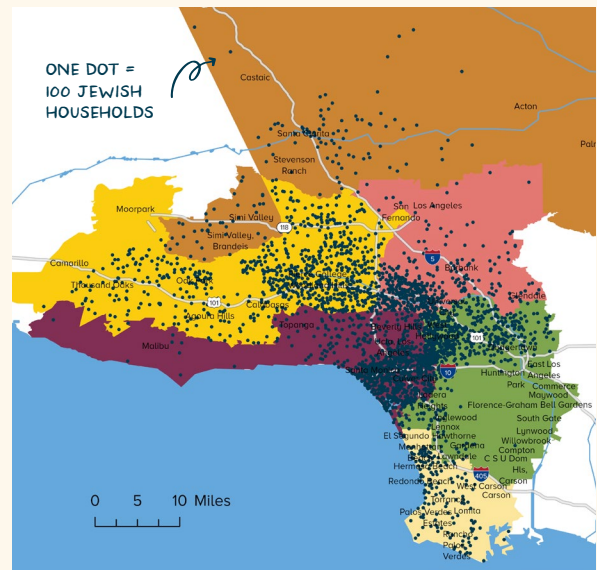
JEWISH HOUSEHOLDS	294,200
PEOPLE IN JEWISH HOUSEHOLDS	737,900
NON-JEWISH INDIVIDUALS	173,800
JEWISH INDIVIDUALS	564,700
ADULTS	
JEWISH	462,900
NON-JEWISH OR UNKNOWN	143,900
CHILDREN	
JEWISH	101,800
NON-JEWISH OR UNKNOWN	29,900

Note: Numbers do not add up to total due to rounding.

GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION

For purposes of this study, the boundaries of the Los Angeles Jewish community are defined as:

- East from the coastline
- West from Silver Lake/Downtown/the 710 freeway
- North from San Pedro, including the San Fernando, Conejo, Simi, Santa Clarita, and Antelope Valleys.



PERCENTAGE OF JEWISH HOUSEHOLDS IN EACH REGION:

- 4% NORTH COUNTY VALLEYS
- 26% WEST VALLEY
- 15% EAST VALLEY
- 24% CENTRAL/METRO/MID
- 26% WESTSIDE
- 5% SOUTH BAY

COUPLES & CHILDREN

Jewish households are defined as those that include at least one Jewish adult. Sixty-one percent of these households in Los Angeles include a couple who is married or partnered. Among those couples, 43% are inmarried (two Jewish individuals), and 57% are intermarried (one Jewish individual and one who is not Jewish). The intermarriage rate is similar to that of all US Jews.³

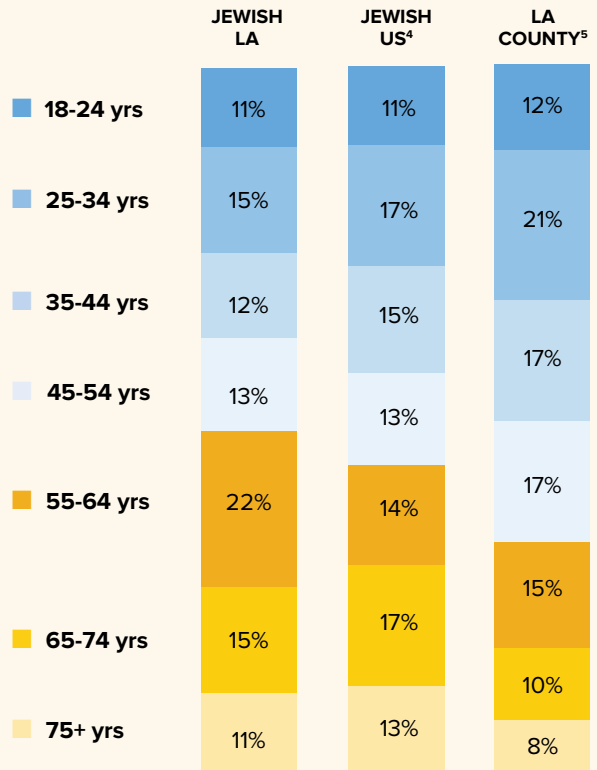
Among the nearly 132,000 children who live in Los Angeles Jewish households, about three quarters (102,000) are considered Jewish in some way by their parents. Almost all of these children (90,000) are described by their parents as exclusively Jewish. Another 15% of children are not considered Jewish by their parents, including 3% who have a religion other than Judaism and 12% who do not have a religious identity.

More than half of LA's Jewish children (58%), or nearly 59,000 children, live with inmarried parents. Thirty percent of Jewish children live with intermarried parents; of those, half have one Jewish parent and one parent with no religion; the other half have one Jewish parent and one parent of a different religion. Another 12% of Jewish children live with a single parent.

AGE

Los Angeles Jewish community members skew older than the LA County population as a whole.

AGES OF JEWISH ADULTS



GENDER IDENTITY & SEXUAL ORIENTATION

GENDER: Overall, the Los Angeles Jewish community is 49% female, 49% male, and 1% non-binary or another gender identity.

LGBTQ: Eight percent of Jewish adults in Los Angeles identify as LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning), and 14% of Jewish households have a member (who may or may not be Jewish) who identifies as LGBTQ. Nationally, 4% of US Jewish adults identify as gay or lesbian, and another 5% describe themselves as bisexual.⁶

Diversity

OF ORIGIN, RACE, AND ETHNICITY

The Los Angeles Jewish community includes a large number of households with members born outside of the United States and/or who have diverse racial and ethnic identities. Jewish individuals with these backgrounds are younger on average than other LA Jews, and for that reason, their numbers are likely to increase in the years ahead. These findings point to the variety of ways in which members of each group engage in Jewish life and think about their Jewish identities.

About half of Jewish households in LA include an immigrant to the United States or someone whose parent is an immigrant. Jewish adults' regions of origin include Russia/the Former Soviet Union, Latin America, Israel, Iran, and Europe.

Both Israeli-Americans and Latino/a Jews are younger than the Jewish population as a whole, with about half the adults in each group ages 40 or younger. As they age, it is possible that they will constitute a growing proportion of the community.

Understanding the diversity within Jewish households is critical for the future of the Jewish community. Current age patterns suggest that diversity is likely to increase over time

Although the Jewish engagement of Persian Jews and Israeli-American Jews in LA is, in general, stronger than average, the Jewish engagement of Latino/a Jews and Jews from Russian/FSU is comparable to that of all Jews in LA. Differences in Jewish engagement are reflected in the organizations and activities that Jewish adults participate in, their degrees of connection to the community, and their attitudes about what is most important in Jewish life.

Six percent of LA Jewish adults identify as a person of color, and 9% of Jewish children identify as a person of color. Among Jewish adults who identify as a person of color, over 60% are ages 40 or younger. These age patterns suggest that the racial diversity of the LA Jewish community is likely to increase over time.



CONSIDER THIS

Among Jewish adults ages 30 and younger

50%

feel more welcome at Jewish programs when people with diverse backgrounds attend



48%

feel more welcome when policies around inclusion and diversity are made explicit

A welcoming and inclusive environment is important to helping LA Jewish adults feel comfortable at Jewish events. Nearly half of LA Jewish adults of all ages feel more welcome when they see themselves reflected in the people who attend Jewish programs and when people with diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds attend Jewish programs. For younger adults, it is also important that policies around inclusion and diversity be made explicit at Jewish programs.

CONDITIONS THAT MAKE PEOPLE FEEL WELCOME AND COMFORTABLE IN JEWISH SPACES

	SEE YOURSELF REFLECTED IN THE PEOPLE WHO ATTEND	PEOPLE WITH DIVERSE BACKGROUNDS ATTEND	POLICIES AROUND INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY ARE MADE EXPLICIT
ALL JEWISH ADULTS	47%	47%	31%
AGE 22-30	52%	50%	48%
AGE 31-40	57%	61%	41%
AGE 41-54	53%	44%	33%
AGE 55-64	43%	47%	35%
AGE 65-74	36%	38%	19%
AGE 75+	43%	43%	18%

Jewish Engagement

HOW DO LA JEWS ENGAGE IN JEWISH LIFE?

The diversity of Jewish life extends from demographic characteristics such as geography, age, race, and ethnicity, to varieties of Jewish behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs. In LA, Jewish individuals and households have the opportunity to participate in a vast array of Jewish experiences. Decisions regarding whether or not to engage with the Jewish community are driven both by available opportunities (what programs are available, are known to participants, and are accessible) as well as by attitudes and interests (what activities are appealing and worth the commitment of time and resources). Jewish engagement is the complex, multidimensional expression of Jewish identity, in which attitudes and beliefs drive behaviors which, in turn, reinforce and influence attitudes and beliefs.

.....

Traditionally, analyses of Jewish engagement used denominational identification and markers of affiliation, e.g., synagogue membership and donations to Jewish organizations, as indicators of Jewish strength and vitality. To be most useful in understanding Jewish life, a contemporary lens must be multifocal, sensitive to diversity and variety, and responsive to change.

Synagogue membership, denominational affiliation, and support for Jewish communal organizations, continue to be indicators of Jewish engagement but are not the sole measures of involvement with Jewish life. Jewish engagement can be communal through traditional institutions, but also includes participation with emerging organizations and “pop-up” programs at less traditional venues. Jewish activities also include those outside of an organizational framework, such as through books, films, media, and foods, and gatherings with families or friends on special days in the Jewish calendar.

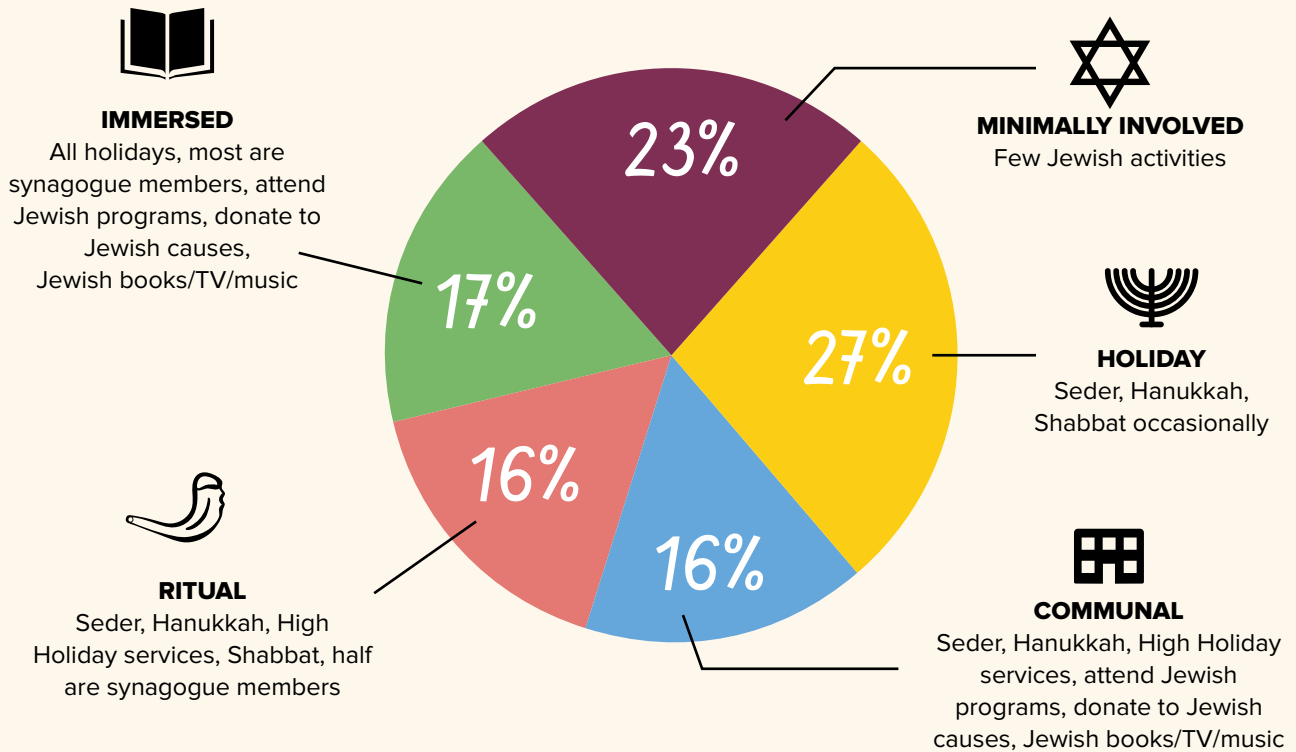
For this study we include not only an expanded list of individual behaviors, but we also examine overall patterns of behaviors to understand how they are clustered among the Jews of Los Angeles. Which Jewish adults tend to do cultural activities, and which do ritual activities? Who prefers to connect with organizations and institutions, and who primarily practices their Jewish life on their own, at home, or with friends and family?



As a tool to understand Jewish engagement in LA, this study identifies five dominant patterns of Jewish activities. These categories were developed using a statistical analysis of levels of participation in 20 different Jewish behaviors, including ritual and cultural behaviors—whether conducted individually, with friends or family, or with formal or informal Jewish organizations. The name of each category reflects the primary way that each group engages in Jewish life. This typology, which we refer to as the "Index of Jewish Engagement," is unique to the LA Jewish community and is used throughout this report to highlight the diversity of expressions of Jewish life.

For the most part, these patterns of Jewish engagement describe a low-to-high continuum, where the Minimally Involved participate in few Jewish activities and the Immersed engage in a wide range of Jewish activities. Differences in levels of Jewish engagement correspond directly to particular attitudes about being Jewish. For example, two thirds of the Immersed group report that being Jewish is extremely important to how they think about themselves, compared to 5% of the Minimally Involved group.

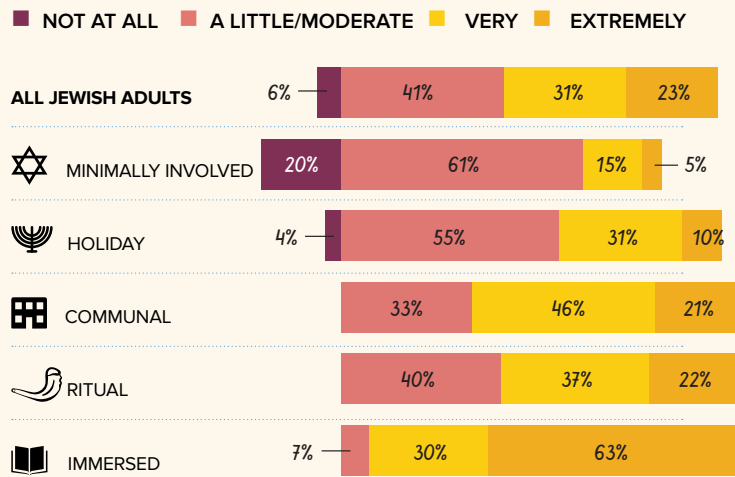
▼ **INDEX OF JEWISH ENGAGEMENT**



Two of the engagement groups, the Communal and Ritual groups, share similar attitudes about being Jewish despite differences in their Jewish behaviors. For the Communal group, Jewish life is expressed primarily through communal and cultural activities—belonging to and volunteering for Jewish organizations, reading Jewish books and publications, and talking about Jewish topics with friends and family. For the Ritual group, Jewish life is tied to synagogues and by marking Shabbat and the High Holidays. Both patterns of Jewish life, however, reflect similar attitudes about the importance of Judaism.

The Index of Jewish Engagement enables us to appreciate how Jewish engagement varies across demographic subgroups. For example, we might expect that younger Jewish adults are less Jewishly engaged than those who are older. In fact, this is not the case. About one-in-five Jewish adults of all ages (except for the oldest) are in the Immersed engagement group and involved in all aspects of Jewish life. The share of Jewish adults in the Minimally Involved group, however, actually increases with age. One quarter of Jewish adults ages 55-64 are in the Minimally Involved group, as are 30% of those ages 65-74 and 39% of those ages 75 and older.

HOW IMPORTANT IS BEING JEWISH TO HOW YOU THINK ABOUT YOURSELF?








AGE BY JEWISH ENGAGEMENT

	MINIMALLY INVOLVED	HOLIDAY	COMMUNAL	RITUAL	IMMERSED
ALL JEWISH ADULTS	23%	27%	16%	16%	17%
22-30	11%	30%	18%	21%	21%
31-40	14%	20%	21%	24%	21%
41-54	19%	35%	14%	13%	19%
55-64	25%	27%	14%	14%	19%
65-74	30%	26%	13%	13%	18%
75+	39%	26%	15%	9%	11%

Household composition—being married and having children—is also related to Jewish engagement. While Jewish engagement is, on average, lower for intermarried households than for unmarried households, intermarried households participate in Jewish behaviors that appear in each of the engagement groups.

Similarly, parents of minor children are, generally, more Jewishly engaged than Jewish adults without children at home. However both parents and non-parents are included in every Jewish engagement group.

HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION BY JEWISH ENGAGEMENT

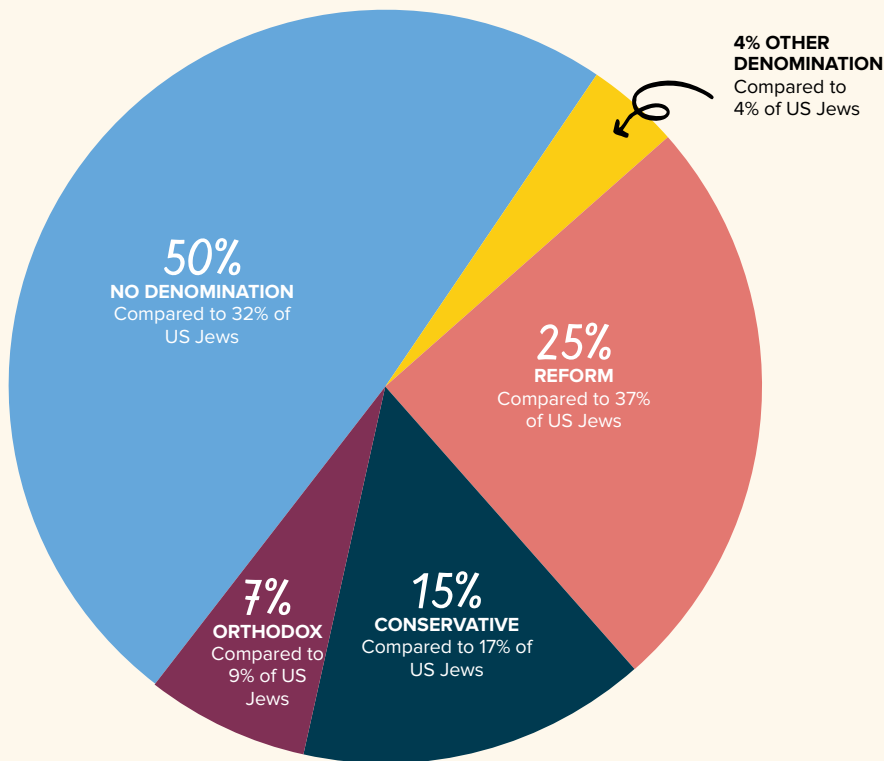
	 MINIMALLY INVOLVED	 HOLIDAY	 COMMUNAL	 RITUAL	 IMMERSSED
ALL JEWISH ADULTS	23%	27%	16%	16%	17%
MARITAL STATUS					
INMARRIED	9%	27%	17%	19%	28%
INTERMARRIED	40%	28%	14%	12%	6%
NOT MARRIED	23%	26%	17%	16%	18%
PARENT STATUS					
NO MINOR CHILDREN	25%	27%	18%	14%	17%
HAS MINOR CHILDREN	15%	23%	14%	22%	25%

Jewish Denominations

DECLINING IDENTIFICATION WITH JEWISH DENOMINATIONS

Nationally, a declining share of Jewish adults identify with a specific Jewish denomination, and in Los Angeles this trend is especially prevalent. Half of Jewish adults have no denomination and identify either as secular/cultural Jews or as “just Jewish.” Among all US Jews, 32% do not identify with a specific denomination. Identifying with no specific denomination, however, should not be interpreted as the absence of Jewish engagement.

DENOMINATION OF JEWISH ADULTS IN LA⁷



CONSIDER THIS

50%






of LA Jewish adults do not identify with a specific denomination. The decline in denominational affiliation is found nationwide, but is more prevalent among LA Jews. Having no specific denomination does not mean that they are not Jewishly engaged

Among the half of LA Jewish adults with no denomination, Jewish engagement falls along the full spectrum. It includes Jewish individuals who are engaged with Jewish organizations, with home-based and personal Jewish behaviors, and with communal and religious life.

More than one third (39%) of Jewish adults with no denomination are in the Minimally Involved group, and another third (35%) are in the Holiday group. Six percent of Jewish adults with no denomination are in the Immersed group, 7% are in the Ritual group, and 13% are in the Communal group.

Among the half of LA Jewish adults with no denomination, Jewish engagement falls along the full spectrum, as indicated by the Index of Jewish Engagement

JEWISH ENGAGEMENT BY DENOMINATION

	 MINIMALLY INVOLVED	 HOLIDAY	 COMMUNAL	 RITUAL	 IMMERSED
ALL JEWISH ADULTS	23%	27%	16%	16%	17%
ORTHODOX	0%	3%	< 1%	10%	87%
CONSERVATIVE	7%	15%	12%	26%	40%
REFORM	7%	26%	24%	28%	15%
OTHER DENOMINATION	14%	5%	29%	26%	26%
NO DENOMINATION	36%	35%	15%	8%	7%

Jewish Life

TRADITIONAL AND EMERGING PRACTICES

Some of the traditional ways of participating in Jewish life, such as synagogue and organizational membership, no longer resonate for the majority of LA Jewish households. One quarter of Jewish adults in LA reside in households in which someone is a member of a synagogue, congregation, or other Jewish worship community. The rate of synagogue membership in LA is lower than among all US Jewish adults, of whom 35% live in synagogue-member households.⁸

One might expect that members of the Jewish community would become more institutionally involved as they age. Somewhat surprisingly, that is not the case in LA. Levels of formal memberships are similar for Jewish households of all ages.

At the same time, participation in Jewish life frequently occurs outside of institutional affiliations. Some of these activities are, in fact, more common among younger Jewish adults. More than half of Jewish adults ages 22-30 talk about Jewish topics frequently, and almost one quarter read or watch Jewish-themed books, films, or music frequently.

CONSIDER THIS

Most LA Jews do connect to Jewish life, but often this is happening outside of traditional synagogues and organizations. For example, more than half of young adults ages 22-30 are engaged Jewishly through conversation, books, films, and music

PERSONAL JEWISH PRACTICES

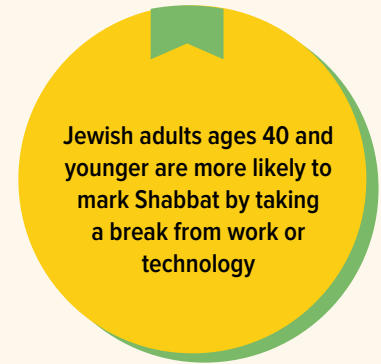
Jewish adults who do these activities often.

	TALK ABOUT JEWISH TOPICS	JEWISH BOOKS, FILMS, MUSIC	WEAR JEWISH SYMBOL IN PUBLIC	STUDY JEWISH TEXT
ALL JEWISH ADULTS	34%	12%	11%	8%
AGE 22-30	53%	23%	20%	13%
AGE 31-40	44%	14%	15%	11%
AGE 41-54	33%	10%	10%	8%
AGE 55-64	34%	11%	6%	8%
AGE 65-74	32%	6%	9%	5%
AGE 75+	22%	5%	7%	5%

Marking Shabbat in any way is more prevalent among Jewish adults younger than age 55 compared to older Jewish adults.

MARK SHABBAT IN SOME WAY

	MARK SHABBAT EVER	MARK SHABBAT WEEKLY OR ALMOST WEEKLY
ALL JEWISH ADULTS	61%	28%
AGE 22-30	69%	37%
AGE 31-40	80%	36%
AGE 41-54	71%	32%
AGE 55-64	60%	27%
AGE 65-74	46%	25%
AGE 75+	41%	17%



Even though younger Jewish adults do not attend Jewish religious services more than other age groups, they are more likely than other Jewish adults to mark Shabbat by taking a break from work or from technology; attend Shabbat programs other than services; or engage in Jewish learning, meditation, or another spiritual practice.

ALTERNATIVE SHABBAT RITUALS

	TAKE A BREAK FROM WORK	TAKE A BREAK FROM TECHNOLOGY	ATTEND SHABBAT PROGRAMS OTHER THAN SERVICES	JEWISH LEARNING OR READING	MEDITATION OR SPIRITUAL PRACTICE
ALL JEWISH ADULTS	24%	18%	12%	19%	19%
AGE 22-30	38%	33%	17%	24%	30%
AGE 31-40	39%	27%	18%	24%	27%
AGE 41-54	28%	20%	13%	21%	23%
AGE 55-64	22%	16%	10%	15%	15%
AGE 65-74	12%	6%	7%	15%	11%
AGE 75+	9%	7%	7%	10%	6%

What Is Important About Being Jewish?

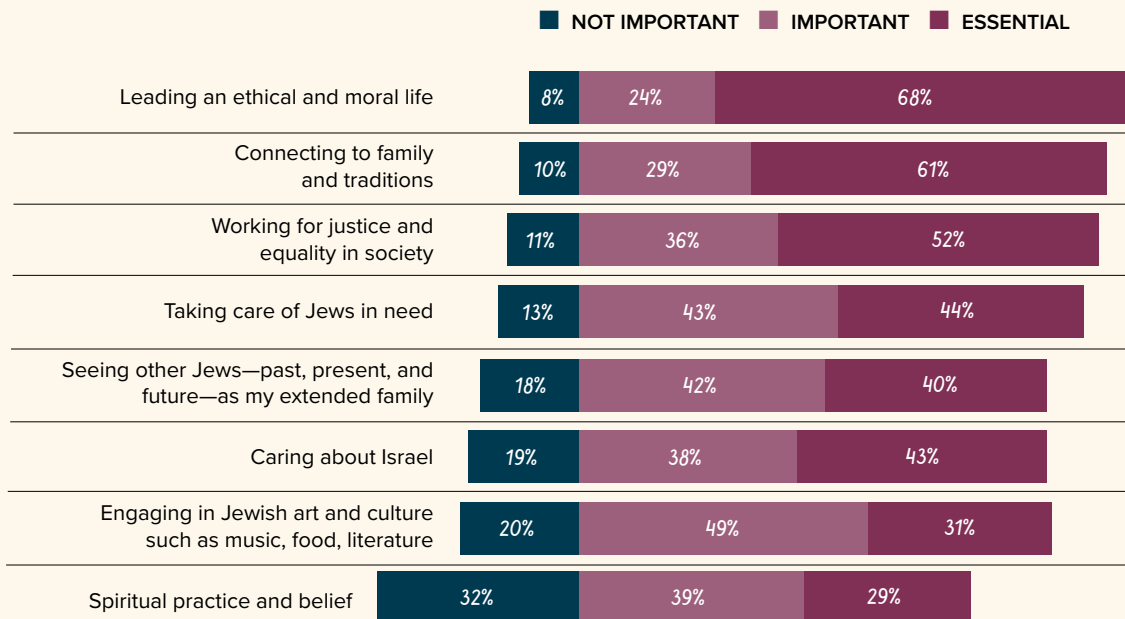
The study asked whether various dimensions of Jewish life were “essential,” “important,” or “not important” to what being Jewish means. Understanding how engagement groups think about these aspects of being Jewish sheds some light on how each group understands its Jewish identity and suggests opportunities for strengthening its Jewish engagement. Identifying attitudes that are widely shared between groups can also help identify areas for collaboration.

Among all LA Jewish adults, the majority believe leading a moral and ethical life (69%), connecting family and traditions (62%), and working for justice and equality (54%) are essential to being Jewish.

Where comparisons can be drawn, these responses are similar to the responses among all US Jews.⁹ Among all US Jewish adults, 72% report that leading an ethical and moral life is essential to being Jewish, 51% say that continuing family traditions is essential to being Jewish, and 59% say that working for justice and equality is essential to being Jewish.

What's most essential to being Jewish for LA Jews? Leading a moral and ethical life, connecting to family and traditions, and working for justice and equality

WHAT IS ESSENTIAL AND IMPORTANT ABOUT BEING JEWISH



More than two-in-five Jewish adults in the Minimally Involved group consider the universal values of leading a moral and ethical life and working for justice and equality to be essential to being Jewish, far more than any other aspect of Jewish life. For Holiday Jews, leading a moral and ethical life (64%) and connecting to family and traditions (59%) are the aspects of being Jewish considered most essential.






One of the distinguishing characteristics of the Communal group is its interest in justice and equality. Two thirds of Jewish adults in the Communal group consider working for justice and equality to be an essential part of being Jewish, more than any other engagement group. The Communal and Immersed

groups have the largest shares of Jewish adults who consider engaging in Jewish art and culture to be essential to being Jewish (44% and 49% respectively).

Where the engagement groups differ most in their values is the importance they place on spiritual practice and belief. While 67% of those in the Immersed group consider spirituality to be essential to being Jewish, only one third of those in the Communal and Ritual groups (28% and 32% respectively), 19% of those in the Holiday group, and 4% of the Minimally Involved consider spirituality as essential to being Jewish.

One of the biggest differences among engagement groups is their view of the importance of spiritual practice and belief

▼ **WHAT IS ESSENTIAL ABOUT BEING JEWISH BY ENGAGEMENT GROUP**

	ETHICAL AND MORAL LIFE	CONNECTING TO FAMILY AND TRADITIONS	JUSTICE AND EQUALITY	HELP JEWS IN NEED	CARING ABOUT ISRAEL	SEEING OTHER JEWS AS EXTENDED FAMILY	ENGAGING IN JEWISH ART AND CULTURE	SPIRITUAL PRACTICE AND BELIEF
ALL JEWISH ADULTS	68%	61%	52%	44%	43%	40%	31%	29%
 MINIMALLY INVOLVED	43%	18%	44%	13%	17%	16%	15%	4%
 HOLIDAY	64%	59%	51%	37%	38%	39%	31%	19%
 COMMUNAL	77%	77%	68%	54%	43%	45%	44%	28%
 RITUAL	77%	75%	49%	50%	46%	45%	30%	32%
 IMMERSSED	90%	90%	61%	76%	73%	68%	49%	67%

Almost all LA Jewish adults are concerned about antisemitism

Being Jewish in LA is not only about positive values and attitudes, but also about shared concerns. Nearly all Jewish adults in Los Angeles are concerned about antisemitism. Three

quarters are very concerned about antisemitism around the world, and nearly 70% are very concerned about antisemitism in the United States.

Overall, 18% of Jewish adults in LA indicated that they personally experienced antisemitism in the previous year. The majority of these experiences involved offenses that could be described as microaggressions, stereotypes, slights, or jokes. Many experiences that were reported included public or online comments, or those overheard in conversation, rather than offenses targeted directly at the respondent.

Younger Jewish adults reported more personal experiences of antisemitism than did older Jewish adults. Despite this difference, however, concerns about antisemitism are higher among older Jewish adults than younger Jews.

CONCERN ABOUT ANTISEMITISM

Percentage of Jewish adults

	AROUND THE WORLD	IN THE UNITED STATES
NOT AT ALL CONCERNED	1%	1%
NOT TOO CONCERNED	2%	5%
SOMEWHAT CONCERNED	21%	25%
VERY CONCERNED	76%	68%

FREQUENCY OF TRAVEL TO ISRAEL

Percentage of Jewish adults

NEVER	41%
ONCE	25%
MORE THAN ONCE	24%
LIVED IN ISRAEL	10%

Israel plays a central role in the Jewish identity of many Jewish adults in LA. More than half of LA Jewish adults have been to Israel, 65% feel somewhat or very attached to Israel, and 80% of Jewish adults consider Israel to be an important or essential part of being Jewish. At the same time, there are noteworthy differences among community members with regard to their views about Israel and their level of support for Israel. Based on their comments about the LA Jewish community in general, attitudes about Israel are controversial for some LA Jews and can lead to feelings of alienation from the Jewish community.

CONSIDER THIS

Over **50%**

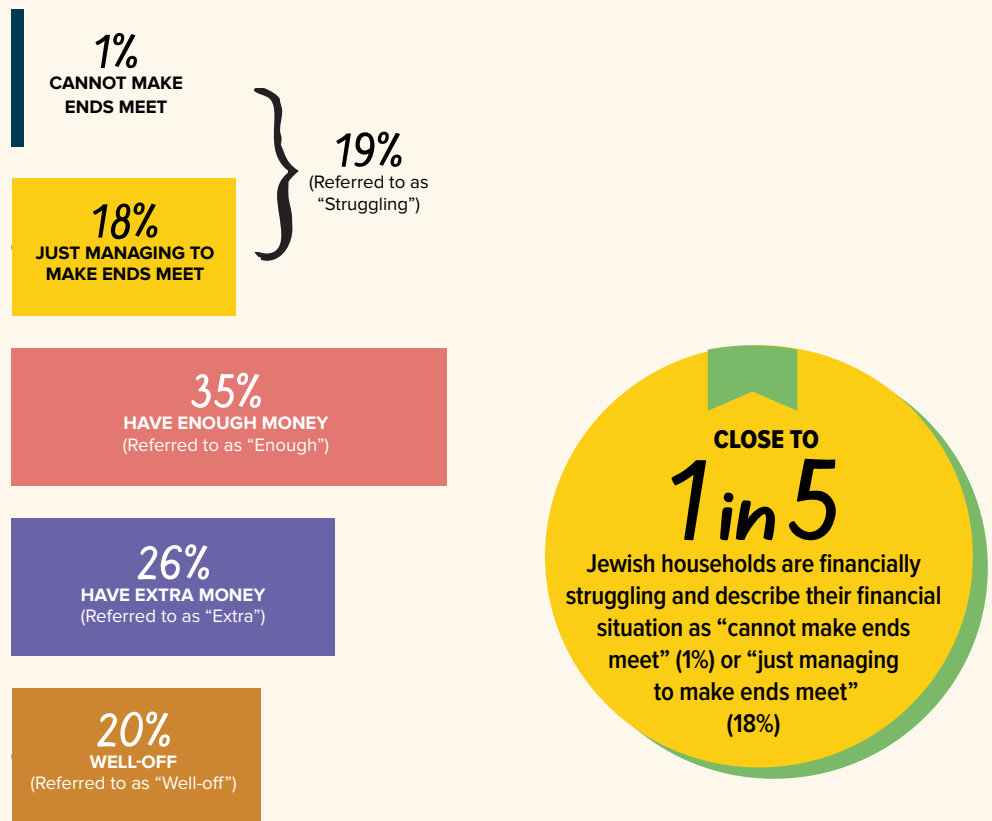
of LA Jewish adults have been to Israel and feel at least somewhat attached to Israel. 80% of Jewish adults consider Israel to be an important or essential part of being Jewish

Financial Well-being

Among the nearly 300,000 LA Jewish households, close to one-in-five describe their financial situation as “cannot make ends meet” (1%) or “just managing to make ends meet” (18%). We refer to these two groups collectively as “financially struggling.” At the other end of the scale, one-in-five households describe their standard of living as “well-off.”

HOUSEHOLD FINANCIAL SITUATION

Percent of Jewish households that describe themselves as...
(Text in parentheses is the category name used within this report)



There are both low-income and high-income Jewish households that consider themselves to be financially struggling. Fifty-seven percent of Jewish households earning less than \$50,000 a year and 7% of Jewish households earning more than \$150,000 describe themselves as financially struggling.

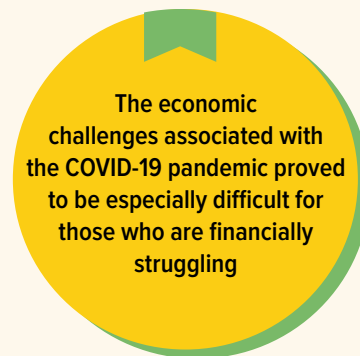
One measure of financial well-being is reflected in how confident respondents feel about their ability to cover short-term and long-term financial expenses. Six percent of all LA Jewish adults and nearly one quarter of those financially struggling are concerned about meeting basic living expenses.

Another indicator of financial insecurity is the inability to pay an unexpected \$400 emergency expense with cash, money currently in a bank account, or on a credit card that can be paid in full. Although 5% of all Jewish households report that they could not cover that emergency expense, the proportion rises to one-in-five among financially struggling households.

Housing in Los Angeles is very expensive, and more than one-in-four households indicate that they spend at least 30% of their income on housing. The share of Jewish households spending at least 30% of their income on housing is relatively high across all standard of living levels, but significantly higher (59%) among financially struggling households.

IMPACT OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC

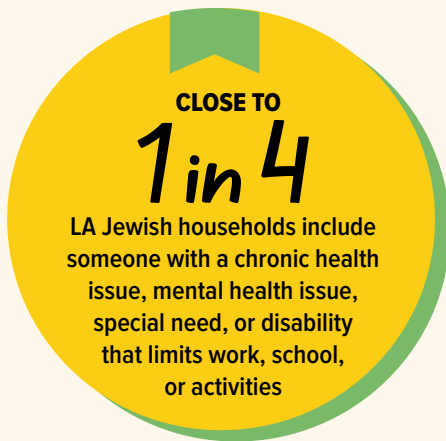
The COVID-19 pandemic, which began in March 2020, brought with it many challenges; the economic challenges proved to be especially difficult for those who were already financially struggling. Close to half of the households that are currently financially struggling report that their financial situation has worsened since the pandemic began. In contrast, more than half of the well-off group report their financial situation is “about the same,” and more than one third of the well-off group report that their situation is “better” than before the pandemic.



Health and Social Service Needs

Households that are financially struggling have significantly higher needs for a range of social services including help with gaining and accessing public benefits, employment assistance, legal assistance, financial assistance, and food assistance. In financially struggling households, 60% have at least one of the social service needs, and of those, almost half (47%) have at least one unmet need.

.....



Close to one-in-four LA Jewish households (23%) include someone with a chronic health issue, mental health issue, special need, or disability that limits work, school, or activities. The majority of those who report a health need or issue are adults, but 2% of households include a child with a limiting health issue. Among all LA Jewish households, 5% report that in the three months prior to the survey, they did not receive all the services they needed to manage the limiting health issue.

One of the most significant needs in the LA Jewish community is for mental health services, and this need is even more striking among young adults. Of all LA Jewish households, 6% report that there is someone in the household with a severe and persistent mental illness, and 30% report having someone in the household who needs mental health or substance abuse treatment services.

Among Jewish households headed by young adults ages 22-30, 21% report severe and persistent mental illness, and nearly half (47%) need mental health or substance abuse treatment services. Of those who report that they did need a mental health service, 22% did not receive this service.

Larger shares of Jewish young adults also report experiencing emotional difficulties, compared to their older counterparts. Among Jewish adults ages 22 to 30, 28% report experiencing emotional or mental difficulties most or all of the time in the month prior to the survey, and 30% felt lonely most or all of the time over the same time period.

MENTAL HEALTH

	SEVERE AND PERSISTENT MENTAL ILLNESS	NEEDED MENTAL HEALTH OR SUBSTANCE ABUSE TREATMENT
ALL JEWISH HOUSEHOLDS	6%	30%
AGE 22-30	21%	47%
AGE 31-40	6%	44%
AGE 41-54	5%	42%
AGE 55-64	6%	34%
AGE 65-74	8%	22%
AGE 75+	3%	12%

QUESTION TEXT:

Do you or anyone in your household have... severe and persistent mental illness (e.g., depression, anxiety, bipolar, schizophrenia)

In the past year, did you or anyone in your household need... mental health or substance abuse treatment (e.g., counseling, medication, psychotherapy, inpatient treatment)

CONSIDER THIS

One of the most significant needs in the LA Jewish community is for mental health services, and this need is even more striking among young adults

Nearly
50%

of Jewish adults ages 30 and younger needed mental health or substance abuse treatment; of them, one-in-five did not receive needed treatment

EMOTIONAL DIFFICULTIES

	EMOTIONAL OR MENTAL DIFFICULTIES PAST MONTH: OFTEN OR ALL THE TIME	FELT LONELY PAST MONTH: OFTEN OR ALL THE TIME
ALL JEWISH ADULTS	6%	9%
AGE 22-30	28%	30%
AGE 31-40	8%	10%
AGE 41-54	7%	10%
AGE 55-64	4%	6%
AGE 65-74	3%	5%
AGE 75+	1%	4%

Financial Limitations to Jewish Life

Although Jewish engagement is sometimes assumed to be correlated with financial well-being, when we look at the full scope of Jewish engagement as described in this report, there are no significant differences between overall financial situation and overall Jewish engagement. Despite this pattern, there are specific types of Jewish behaviors that are associated with financial status. For example, wealthier Jewish households are more likely to belong to a Jewish organization and donate to Jewish organizations and causes than households with fewer financial resources.

It is also noteworthy that financial conditions limit Jewish participation for Jewish households at all financial levels. One-in-five Jewish adults in LA state that the expenses of Jewish life limit their Jewish involvement. Among those who are financially struggling, nearly half report that their finances limit their Jewish participation, but even among the well-off, 11% indicate that Jewish participation is too expensive.

One-in-five Jewish households report that they required financial assistance to join a synagogue or enroll in school or camp, or that they were unable to participate in a Jewish activity, join a synagogue, or donate to Jewish causes for financial reasons. Although half of financially struggling households report one limitation on Jewish participation, significant shares of middle-income families also limit their Jewish lives in some way because of financial constraints. For these households, the largest impact on Jewish participation is a reduction in charitable giving.

FINANCES LIMITED PARTICIPATION IN JEWISH LIFE

ALL JEWISH ADULTS	21%
FINANCIAL SITUATION	
STRUGGLING	43%
ENOUGH	25%
EXTRA	19%
WELL-OFF	11%



Conclusions and Takeaways

The Los Angeles Jewish community is large and diverse. The community is made up of individuals of various racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, and cultural backgrounds, who live in a number of household types and have varying connections to Judaism. Jewish Angelenos are dispersed across a wide geographic area that reflects variation in Jewish density, institutions, and opportunities.

The size and diversity of the LA Jewish community reflect strength and create opportunities, but also pose a variety of challenges. How can organizations meet the unique needs of diverse community members, while also build bridges to achieve common purposes?

The 2021 Study of Jewish LA provides systematic data that can be used to inform a strategic planning process to address these challenges:

- Data on the wide range of backgrounds of Jewish Angelenos, including national origin, race and ethnicity, and different ways of identifying Jewishly, suggest that programs should not adopt a “one size fits all” policy. In some cases, programs and support will need to target specific groups; in other cases, professionals responsible for program development will need to ensure that the unique identities of group members are acknowledged and supported in shared spaces.
- Among Los Angeles Jewish households with a married or partnered couple, the majority include a non-Jewish member. Developing a strategy to engage these intermarried households will be essential to ensuring a vibrant future for the community. Finding ways to deepen intermarried families’ engagement with Jewish education and Jewish institutions is essential, not only for the families involved, but also for maintaining the community’s overall strength.
- The study documents a variety of types of engagement with Jewish ritual and religious institutions. Half of adult Jewish Angelenos do not identify with a denomination, and only one quarter of households are synagogue members. At the same time, many Jewish adults are involved in cultural and personal expressions of Judaism. Strategic approaches will need to support and enrich emerging and non-traditional Jewish organizations and activities.
- Los Angeles Jews include many who are “well-off” financially, along with a nearly equal proportion who are “just managing to make ends meet.” Those who are financially struggling have higher levels of health and social service needs. Along with these households, many others who do not meet an income-based poverty criteria are limited in their ability to participate in Jewish life. Finding ways to support the human service and Jewish needs of these households is essential to the overall health of the community.
- The geographic dispersion of the Los Angeles Jewish community is a special challenge for communal planning. The community will need to examine how best to distribute and decentralize services, while also harnessing technology to allow remote and hybrid participation in Jewish life.

The 2021 Study of Jewish LA has been designed to provide systematic data to guide strategic planning. Understanding the composition of the community and its diverse needs is an essential step, not only to improving the well-being and deepening the Jewish engagement of its members, but also to strengthening the community as a whole.

Notes

- 1 ACS 2019 5-year estimates from US Census Bureau, "American Community Survey, 2019 5-Year Estimates."
- 2 Pini Herman, "Los Angeles Jewish Population Survey '97" (Los Angeles: The Jewish Federation of Greater Los Angeles, 1998). https://www.jewishdatabank.org/content/upload/bjd-b/345/C-CA-Los_Angeles-1997-Report.pdf. For the study, adults who considered themselves to be Jewish and another religion were not classified as Jewish.
- 3 Pew Research Center, "Jewish Americans in 2020" (Washington DC: Pew Research Center, 2021). www.pewforum.org/2021/05/11/jewish-americans-in-2020/ Based on marriages only, not partners.
- 4 Pew Research Center, "Jewish Americans in 2020."
- 5 ACS 2019 5-year estimates
- 6 Pew Research Center, "Jewish Americans in 2020."
- 7 US Jewish data from Pew Research Center, "Jewish Americans in 2020."
- 8 Pew Research Center, "Jewish Americans in 2020."
- 9 Pew Research Center, "Jewish Americans in 2020." In the Pew survey, the response option was worded "Continuing family traditions."