



# Foundation of Our Future: Portrait of Jewish Baltimore

BALTIMORE'S JEWISH COMMUNITY  
STUDY 2020



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COHEN CENTER FOR  
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**The Associated**  
Jewish Federation of Baltimore

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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.

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 socio-demographic data on the Jewish community.

# PREFACE

To the Readers:

The data for the 2020 Baltimore Jewish Community Study were collected from April to July 2019 and, as such, predate the coronavirus pandemic. Although the study was conducted under relatively normal times, as we write this in March and April 2020, things have shifted considerably for the Jewish community and the world at large.

We often tell people that Jewish community studies are snapshots in time that have a “shelf life” of roughly 10 years under normal circumstances, but that sharp changes in local or national trends can shorten the amount of time before the data really need a “refresh.” The COVID-19 pandemic, which began in January 2020, but first became a subject of significant public attention in the United States in late February and early March, seems likely to touch many aspects of our lives. How it will affect the physical, mental, and financial health of the Greater Baltimore Jewish Community as of this writing remains unknown.

Nevertheless, we believe the study will be extremely useful to you now and in the years to come. The findings of the study are the most accurate representations of the Baltimore Jewish Community—prior to the world changing—that we can produce. They are the baseline for comparing the community before, during, and after the pandemic. The study shows what “normal” looked like and can help establish benchmarks for gauging communal recovery. It shows where the community was strong before the pandemic, and where the community can use its strengths to aid in recovery. And it shows where the community had some challenges before the pandemic, which suggests opportunities for creative efforts to strengthen the community in a time of crisis.

As we shelter in our own homes, we remember that both the Jewish people and the United States have endured many crises in our history. Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik reminds us that this crisis will not define us and that we are called upon to “transform fate into destiny and a passive existence into an active existence; an existence of compulsion, perplexity and muteness into an existence replete with a powerful will, with resourcefulness, daring and imagination” (*Kol Dodi Dofek*). Although we are geographically distant from you today, we are experiencing the same challenges; we are with you in spirit and are confident that our communities will get through this crisis together. We look forward to the day when you will be able to use the results of this study not only to aid with recovery, but to grow and strengthen the Baltimore Jewish Community with “resourcefulness, daring, and imagination.”

From,  
The Authors

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# LETTER FROM THE ASSOCIATED

Dear Baltimore Community,

On behalf of The Associated: Jewish Federation of Baltimore, we are pleased to present the results of our 2020 Community Study – *Foundation of Our Future: Portrait of Jewish Baltimore*. As The Associated celebrates its centennial this year, the study provides a snapshot of a strong and vibrant Jewish community that continues to evolve. The data yielded by the study will help us prepare for the challenges and opportunities that will present themselves in the coming years.

How large is our community? Where does our population live? How do we engage in Jewish life and connect with the Jewish community? How many of us live in poverty or have unmet financial needs? How many people with disabilities live in Jewish Baltimore? How do we connect to Israel? This study answers these and many other questions that are relevant to the present and future of our community.

We thank the Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies at Brandeis University and, in particular, Dr. Leonard Saxe and Dr. Matthew Boxer for their wisdom, guidance and expertise in conducting this research. It is thanks to them that we can tell the story of our community through a wealth of data and analyses.

We also thank Ruth Greenfield Miller, Chief Planning Officer of The Associated, for her skilled leadership and her invaluable insights; Carrie Parker, Director of Impact Assessment, for her efforts from beginning to end, and all those at The Associated who supported the study. Thanks, as well to the Community Study Management Team, a group of lay leaders whose sound judgment and institutional knowledge contributed immeasurably to the study, and to the Community Study Task Force, whose members helped make the study useful to the entire Jewish Community. Finally, we thank MileOne Autogroup for its generosity in sponsoring the 2020 Community Study. MileOne's support made this research possible.

We now begin the process of assisting the community in realizing the benefits that the study is intended to achieve. We look forward to the wide range of discussions, insights and initiatives that will emerge from our collective review of the information and help guide us into the next decade.

Sincerely,  
Martin S. Himeles, Jr., Co-Chair, Community Study  
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The University of New Hampshire Survey Center served as the call center for this study. We are grateful to Zachary Azem, who was our main point of contact, the survey instrument programmer, and the supervisor for data collection. Sean McKinley was instrumental in testing the survey. Robert Durant and Carolyn Lamb managed the calling operation, including training and supervising callers, fielding callbacks, and countless other tasks. We would also like to thank the many callers who collected data from respondents.

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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In anticipation of their hundredth year in 2020, The Associated: Jewish Community Federation of Baltimore contracted with the Maurice and Marilyn Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies (CMJS)/Steinhardt Social Research Institute (SSRI) at Brandeis University to conduct a local Jewish community study. The goals of the research were to estimate the size and characteristics of the Jewish population of the catchment area under the purview of The Associated and generate findings that could help Jewish organizations in Baltimore plan for the next decade and serve the Jewish community as effectively as possible. A diverse group of lay and professional leaders from across the Baltimore Jewish community aided in the design of the study; CMJS/SSRI used the latest available sampling and survey techniques in conducting the study.

The data from the study, collected and analyzed throughout 2019, provide a snapshot of a community and the ways in which members of Baltimore's Jewish community engage with Jewish life. This summary outlines some of the highlights of the findings. Readers may explore the full report or individual chapters, where more detail is provided. Technical appendices are also available, which describe details of the study design and provide comparison charts (Appendix B) that provide detailed cross-tabulations of the findings for key segments of the Baltimore Jewish community.

The Baltimore Jewish community consists of approximately 46,700 households that are home to 115,400 individuals, including 95,400 Jews (74,900 adults and 20,500 children) and 20,000 non-Jews (18,000 adults and 2,000 children). The community is exceptionally strong in Pikesville, Owings Mills, and the Park Heights and Cheswolde neighborhoods of the City of Baltimore, where many of the central institutions of the Baltimore Jewish community are located. Jewish families and individuals who live farther away from these institutions do not have the same access or opportunities to engage in Jewish communal life and feel their needs are not fully met.

Just as the Baltimore Jewish community is diverse demographically, so too is there a variety of types of Jewish identification and means of engagement in Jewish life. Examining the ways in which Jewish adults not only view, but also enact their Jewish identities is necessary to understand the population and the ways in which Jewish life in the region can be enhanced. The study

includes an “Index of Jewish Engagement,” created uniquely for the Baltimore Jewish community, that focuses on Jewish behaviors—the ways in which individuals participate in Jewish life—rather than self-defined identities or demographic characteristics.

Baltimore’s synagogues and Jewish educational programs—particularly its day schools, yeshivot, and Hebrew schools—are one of the community’s greatest strengths. At the same time, however, nearly 40% of the population do not participate synagogue life, and 35% of children in grades K-12 are not currently enrolled in any Jewish educational programming. The JCC’s many social, cultural, volunteering, and other programs are critical for this segment of the population. Nevertheless, a significant group within the community feels that the Jewish community is not sufficiently providing for their needs.

Most of the community is middle-class, but a substantial minority feels economic insecurity. Many households struggle to pay their bills and, for some, this is a significant obstacle to participation in Jewish communal life. Related, a substantial proportion of households in the community include someone with a significant disability or chronic physical or mental health condition that limits their ability to work, go to school, or do housework. These needs can also be obstacles to participation in Jewish communal life, and they often overlap with significant financial challenges. Many Jewish adults in Baltimore are also providing care for relatives, separate from routine childcare, and many have parents living in a group home, assisted living facility, nursing home, or independent living community.

The Baltimore Jewish community’s strong ties to Israel are reflected in community members’ high rates of travel to Israel, high rates of following news about Israel, and robust sense of connection to Israel. Members of the community are nearly unanimous in their view of Israel as a homeland for the Jewish people, and strong majorities perceive Israel as a source of pride and as a lively democratic state.

Key specific findings from the study include:

## DEMOGRAPHY

- The Baltimore Jewish community includes approximately 46,700 Jewish households, an increase of 11% since 2010.<sup>1</sup> These households include:
  - ◆ 115,500 individuals (+4% since 2010)
  - ◆ 95,400 Jewish individuals (+4% since 2010)
    - 74,900 adults
    - 20,500 children
  - ◆ 20,000 non-Jewish individuals
    - 18,000 adults
    - 2,000 children

- The mean age of Jewish adults in Baltimore is 50, similar to the national Jewish population. The mean age of all Jews in Baltimore, including children, is 41.
- Twenty-six percent of all Jewish households in Baltimore include at least one child under age 18.
- Of Jewish adults in Baltimore, 20% are ages 18-34, 24% are ages 35-49, 30% are ages 50-64, 22% are ages 65-79, and 4% are 80 or older.
- Nearly half of Jewish adults (45%) were raised in Baltimore.
- Baltimore has one of the largest Orthodox populations in the United States. Twenty-one percent of Jewish adults in Baltimore identify as Orthodox. Similar proportions identify as Conservative (19%) and Reform (18%). Three percent belong to another denomination. Thirty-nine percent identify with no particular denomination.
- Sixty-eight percent of Jewish households in Baltimore include a married couple. Of these, 55% are unmarried and 45% are intermarried. The intermarriage rate is far lower than the national rate (64%).
- Households that include an intermarried couple tend to feel that the community is not welcoming to them, does not care about them, and does not support them.
- One-in-ten Jewish households in Baltimore include someone who identifies as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer.
  - ♦ Four percent of Jewish adults in Baltimore identify as LGBTQ.
  - ♦ Households with an LGBTQ member are about evenly split between those who describe the Jewish community as welcoming to them and those who feel it is not welcoming.
- Eight percent of Jewish adults in Baltimore identify with a racial category other than non-Hispanic white. Many of these members of the community feel they are not fully included as a result of their race or ethnicity.

## GEOGRAPHY

- Pikesville/Mount Washington is the largest area of Jewish residence, with 22% of Jewish households and 25% of Jewish individuals in the community. The next largest areas are Owings Mills/Reisterstown, with 15% of Jewish households and 16% of Jewish individuals, and Park Heights/Cheswolde, with 9% of Jewish households and 15% of Jewish individuals.
- Jewish young adults (ages 18-34) disproportionately live in the City of Baltimore compared to older adults. Very few Jewish adults ages 80 or older live in Carroll and Harford Counties.

## PATTERNS OF JEWISH ENGAGEMENT

- The Index of Jewish Engagement is based on measures from four categories of behavior: family holiday celebrations, ritual practices, communal activities, and personal activities.

- Five distinct and mutually exclusive patterns of behavior emerge from the data:
  - ♦ Familial (16% of Jewish adults): Characterized by participation in family and home-based dimensions of Jewish life.
  - ♦ Personal (19% of Jewish adults): Characterized by participation primarily in Jewish activities that can be done individually. Less active in communal and ritual activities.
  - ♦ Involved (12% of Jewish adults): Characterized by participation in most aspects of Jewish life at a moderate level.
  - ♦ Communal (26% of Jewish adults): Characterized by participation in communal and personal activities.
  - ♦ Immersed (27% of Jewish adults): Characterized by high rates of participation in all aspects of Jewish life.
- Each group includes people of all ages and denominational identities.

## FINANCIAL WELL-BEING

- Thirty-eight percent of households are not confident in their ability to live comfortably during retirement. One quarter of households do not have enough funds to cover three months of expenses were they to face an unexpected loss of income.
- The Baltimore Jewish community is highly educated. Seventy-three percent of Jewish adults in Baltimore have earned at least a bachelor's degree, including half with at least one post-graduate degree.
- Seventy-one percent of Jewish adults in Baltimore are working, either full (57%) or part time (14%). An additional 18% of the population is retired. The remaining 11% are stay-at-home parents, unemployed, on temporary leave, or studying for a degree.
- Four percent of the community describe their standard of living as "prosperous" and nearly one third (31%) say they are "living very comfortably." Another 50% say they are "living reasonably comfortably." But 13% of Jewish households say they are "just getting along," a possible indication of economic vulnerability, while 1% say they are "nearly poor," and 2% say they are "poor."
- Respondents were also asked about life changes in the previous year that resulted in economic hardship. Overall, 18% of households reported encountering such a hardship.
- Ten percent of households include someone who, in the past year, was constrained by financial issues from participating in the Baltimore Jewish community.
  - ♦ The most commonly cited issues were synagogue dues, tuition for Jewish educational programs, and fees for other programs.
  - ♦ Financial constraints were most common for Orthodox households and families with children.



## HEALTH

- Twenty-nine percent of Jewish households in Baltimore include at least one person who is limited by some sort of health issue, special need, or disability.
  - ◆ In 14% of households, or almost half of those with a need, the health issue causes a limitation in the ability to work, attend school, or do housework, including 26% of households where the head of household is 80 or older and 32% of households that describe their standard of living as “just getting along,” “nearly poor,” or “poor.”
  - ◆ Two percent of households do not receive the services needed to address the health issue.
- Thirteen percent of Jewish households are serving as primary caregivers for a relative, separate from routine childcare.
  - ◆ Thirty-four percent of caregivers (representing 4% of households) provide care for someone living in their own household.
  - ◆ Sixty-six percent (9% of all households) provide care for someone in another household in the Baltimore area.
  - ◆ Fourteen percent (2% of all households) are providing care for someone outside the Baltimore area.
  - ◆ Ten percent of caregiving households provide care to people in two or more of these categories.
- Sixteen percent of Jewish adults ages 65 or older are dissatisfied with the amount of time they spend with friends and family. The issue is particularly acute for those who live in the City of Baltimore.
- Eight percent of households include someone who, in the past year, was constrained by health issues from participating in the Baltimore Jewish community. This share includes 20% of households in which the head of household is age 80 or older.

## CHILDREN

- Among the 22,500 children who live in Baltimore Jewish households, 20,500 (91%) are being raised Jewish in some way, either by religion, secularly or culturally, or as Jewish and another religion.
- Among the 2,000 children not being raised Jewish, 1,600 are being raised with no religion, 200 are being raised in another religion, and 200 have not yet had a religion decided for them.
- Virtually all inmarried parents are raising their children Jewish, and among children of intermarried parents, 75% are being raised Jewish in some way.
- Half of Jewish children in grades K-12 were enrolled in some form of Jewish school during

the 2018-19 academic year. This includes 39% in day school or yeshiva, and 12% in part-time school.

- Of Jewish children in grades K-12, 50% participated in at least one form of informal education.
- Of Jewish children who are not yet in kindergarten, 17% were enrolled in a Jewish preschool program.
- Among households with at least one child age 12 or younger, 44% receive books from PJ Library. Expanding enrollment in PJ Library may also serve as a gateway to participation in other Jewish educational programs.

## SYNAGOGUE AND RITUAL LIFE

- One third of households (approximately 15,000) include someone who belongs to a synagogue or another Jewish worship community of some type. Forty percent of Jewish adults live in synagogue-member households, similar to the rest of the country.
  - ◆ Twenty-seven percent of households are dues-paying members of “brick-and-mortar” congregations, traditionally structured with buildings and ordained clergy.
  - ◆ One-in-five synagogue-member households belong to multiple congregations or prayer groups (e.g., independent minyan, Chabad).
  - ◆ Among households who are members of local brick-and-mortar synagogues, 53% are members of Orthodox congregations, 31% are members of Conservative congregations, 18% are members of Reform congregations, and 1% are members of synagogues of other denominations.
  - ◆ Ten percent of households with an intermarried couple and 22% of households with no married couple are members of a Baltimore-area congregation.
- Approximately 65% of Jewish adults attended services at least once in the past year, including 43% of those who are not members of a congregation.
- Passover and Hanukkah are observed by the largest proportion of the Baltimore Jewish community, with 83% attending a seder and 82% lighting Hanukkah candles.
- High Holiday services were attended by 51% of Jewish adults.
- One quarter (25%) of Jewish adults in Baltimore keep kosher at home.

## SOCIAL AND COMMUNAL LIFE

- The Baltimore Jewish community is tightly knit, with most households having lived in the Baltimore area for decades and nearly half of Jewish adults having been raised in the community.
  - ◆ This insularity can make it difficult for newcomers to the community, and people who

lack the Judaic knowledge of those who were raised in the community's schools, to find their place in the community. Many of these people are interested in social and educational programming but are unwilling to join a synagogue.

- ◆ Newcomers are looking for programs to help them learn about the community and acclimate to it, without the pressure or expectation that they will become members of local synagogues or immediately become active supporters.
- ◆ Members of the community without extensive Jewish educational backgrounds feel their lack of knowledge is a significant barrier to participation and are looking for low-pressure adult education programs, where little to no prior knowledge of Jewish texts or traditions, or of Israel, are assumed.
- Two thirds of Baltimore Jewish adults read material from at least one local Jewish organization in the past year, and one third read this type of material at least once a month.
- Forty percent of Jewish adults attended at least one Jewish-sponsored program, activity, or class in Baltimore in the past year, and 13% participated at least once per month.
- A majority of Baltimore's Jews, 59%, attended a program, activity, or service at a local synagogue or congregation in the past year. Thirty-eight percent participated at the JCC of Greater Baltimore, and 15% attended a local Chabad program or service.
- Seventeen percent of Jewish adults volunteered for a local Jewish organization.
- More than half of Jewish households (56%) gave to at least one Jewish organization, representing 69% of households who made any sort of charitable donation. Forty-one percent of Jewish households gave to organizations that primarily serve the Jewish community of Baltimore.
- Almost one quarter (23%) of households donated to a Jewish congregation.
- There a number of reasons why people may not feel connected to the Jewish community. Not being able to find interesting Jewish activities has been a concern for 44% of Jewish adults in Baltimore. A similar proportion, 42%, do not feel they know enough people at Jewish organizations and programs. For 38% of Jews, a lack of connection is related to discomfort with their level of Jewish knowledge.
- The vast majority (95%) of Jews in Baltimore have at least some close Jewish friends, and 42% report that most or all of their closest friends are Jewish.
- Members of the Baltimore Jewish community are concerned about antisemitism, but that worry is more directed at the national (59%) than the local level (26%).
- Nineteen percent of Jewish adults in Baltimore say that safety or security concerns are a barrier to participation in Jewish communal life.

## CONNECTIONS TO ISRAEL

- More than half (59%) of Baltimore Jewish adults have been to Israel at least once.
- Seventeen percent of Jewish adults have traveled with a Jewish organization on a mission or other sponsored trip to Israel. Adults who have traveled to Israel on an educational or volunteer program represent 11% of the population. Twenty-seven percent of age-eligible adults—those younger than age 47—have been to Israel on Birthright.
- Eighty percent of Jewish adults feel at least “a little” connected to Israel, including 34% who feel “very connected.”
- Nearly all Jewish adults see Israel as a homeland for Jews throughout the world (87%).
- Eighty-two percent of Jewish adults feel at least a little comfortable discussing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and 32% feel very much comfortable.

## CHAPTER 1

# INTRODUCTION

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The 2020 Baltimore Jewish Community Study, conducted by the Maurice and Marilyn Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies (CMJS) and the Steinhardt Social Research Institute (SSRI) at Brandeis University and sponsored by The Associated: Jewish Community Federation of Baltimore, employed innovative state-of-the-art methods to create a comprehensive portrait of the characteristics, attitudes, and behaviors of present-day Baltimore Jewry. Some of the issues explored in the study grew out of conversations surrounding the Pew Research Center's *A Portrait of Jewish Americans* (2013), which pointed to growing and shrinking US Jewish sub-populations, declining affiliation in traditional institutions, new forms of Jewish engagement, a rise of both secular and Orthodox Jews, and a relationship between intermarriage and community growth.<sup>2</sup> With the Pew study and the related national discourse as a backdrop, the Baltimore Jewish Community Study seeks to describe the current dynamics of its population.

The principal goal of this study is to provide valid data about the Baltimore Jewish community that can be used by communal organizations and their leadership to design programs and policies that support and enhance Jewish life. Valid data are essential to effective decision making, allocation of resources, strategic priorities, community support, robust participation, and outreach.

Specifically, the study sought 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 and gender, geographic distribution, economic well-being, and other sociodemographic characteristics
- Measure participation in and attitudes toward community institutions, programs, and services
- Understand the multifaceted cultural, communal, and religious expressions of Judaism that constitute Jewish engagement
- Assess attitudes toward Israel and Judaism
- Gauge need and potential need for human services

The Baltimore Jewish Community Study provides a snapshot of today's Baltimore population and considers trends and developments that diverge from those of the past.

## HISTORY

The present study is the latest in a succession of occasional studies about the Baltimore Jewish community. The first study that was regarded as scientific, conducted in 1968, identified 106,300 Jews living in 35,000 households. The most recent demographic study, in 2010, found 92,100 Jews in 42,200 households.<sup>3</sup> All reports on previous studies can be found at the Berman Jewish Data Bank, <<http://www.jewishdatabank.org/studies/us-local-communities.cfm>>.

## METHODOLOGY OVERVIEW

CMJS/SSRI community studies utilize scientific survey methods to collect information from selected members of the community and, from those responses, extrapolate information about the entire community. The 2019 Baltimore Jewish Community Study is based on data collected through telephone and internet surveys from April to July 2019 from a total of 2,597 Jewish households residing for at least part of the year in The Associated's catchment area. The response rate for the primary sample was 35.4%.

Households invited for the survey were randomly selected from a combination of contact information provided by local community organizations and purchased lists of likely Jewish households. To ensure that the households were representative of the entire community, we used additional information to develop the estimates of population size and characteristics reported in this study.

We estimated the population size and basic demographic characteristics using an innovative enhancement of the traditional random digit dial (RDD) survey method. Instead of deriving information about the population from a single RDD phone survey of the local area, the enhanced RDD method relies on a synthesis of national surveys, conducted by government agencies and other organizations, that include information about religion. The synthesis combined data from hundreds of surveys and used information collected from Baltimore residents to estimate the Jewish population in the region. See [ajpp.brandeis.edu](http://ajpp.brandeis.edu) for more information about this approach to Jewish population estimates.

In all studies of members of the Jewish community, more involved members are more motivated, and therefore more likely, to complete a survey than are less involved members. To minimize the bias that this introduces, we validated all results against known benchmarks of community participation and adjusted as needed. Examples of benchmarks are the total number of synagogue member households and the total number of children enrolled in Jewish schools.

See Appendix A for more detail about the survey methods used for this study.

## HOW TO READ THIS REPORT

The present survey of Jewish households is designed to represent the views of an entire community by interviewing a randomly selected sample of households from the community. In order to extrapolate respondent data to the entire community, the data are adjusted (i.e., “weighted”). Each individual respondent is assigned a weight so that his/her survey answers represent the proportion of the overall community that has similar demographic characteristics. The weighted respondent thus stands in for that segment of the population and not only the household from which it was collected. (See Appendix A for more detail.) Unless otherwise specified, this report presents weighted survey data in the form of percentages or proportions. Accordingly, these data should be read not as the percentage or proportion of respondents who answered each question in a given way, but as the percentage or proportion of the population that it is estimated would answer each question in that way had each member of the population 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 are 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 is derived. The uncertainty is quantified as a set of values that range from some percentage below the reported estimate to a similar percentage above it. This range is known as a “confidence interval.” 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, but other confidence levels are used where appropriate. (See Appendix A for details about the magnitude of the confidence intervals around estimates in this study.)

When size estimates of subpopulations (e.g., Orthodox households) are provided, they are 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 are missing, those respondents are counted as if they are not part of the subgroups for purposes of estimation. For this reason, all 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 is also missing. Refer to the codebook, included as Appendix D, for the actual number of responses to each question.

Some tables and figures that present proportions do not add up to 100%. In some cases, this is a result of respondents having the option to select more than one response to a question; in such cases, the text of the report will indicate 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.



For simplicity, in some tables, not all groups will be shown. For example, if the proportion of a group who participated in a Passover seder is shown, the proportion who did not participate will not be shown. When a percentage is between 0% and 0.5% and would otherwise round down to 0%, the number is denoted as < 1. In some cases, there were insufficient respondents to provide reliable estimates. In those cases, the table entry shows “—”.

Some tables report on proportions of households, and others report proportions of adults or Jewish adults. This is always indicated on the top row of the table. When tables report individual characteristics for households, the Jewish engagement group is that of the Jewish respondent for the household. Age is set at the age of the head of household (typically the oldest married Jewish person if there is one; otherwise it is the respondent’s age.) Denomination at the household level is based on the most ritually observant denomination of any adult in the household.

## REPORTING QUALITATIVE DATA

The survey included a number of questions that called for open-text responses. These were used to elicit more information about respondents’ opinions and experiences than could be provided in a check box format. All such responses were categorized, or “coded,” to identify topics and themes that were mentioned by multiple respondents. Because a consistent set of responses were not offered to each respondent, it would be misleading to report the weighted proportion of responses to these questions. Instead, we report 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 reported, with identifying information removed and edited for clarity.

## COMPARISONS ACROSS SURVEYS

As part of the goal to assess trends, comparisons of answers to a number of questions are made to earlier local data (in particular, the 2010 study<sup>4</sup>) and data from national studies (in particular, Pew’s 2013 *A Portrait of Jewish Americans*<sup>5</sup>). All comparisons to the United States Jewish population are based on data drawn from the Pew study. Although these analyses are informative, because of methodological differences, comparisons across studies are less precise and reliable than the data from the present study alone.

## REPORT OVERVIEW

This report presents key findings about the Baltimore Jewish Community. Beginning with a portrait of the community as a whole, the report continues with a more in-depth look at topics of interest to community members and leaders.

## **Chapter 2. Demographic Snapshot**

This chapter provides an overview of the demographic composition of the Baltimore Jewish community and discusses changes in the Jewish population size and characteristics since 2010.

## **Chapter 3. Patterns of Jewish Engagement**

This chapter describes the multifaceted ways in which the Jews of the Baltimore define and express their Jewish identity. A set of behavioral measures characterize Jewish engagement based on participation in Jewish life. A typology of Jewish engagement helps explain Jewish behaviors and attitudes. This chapter also reports on attitudes about the meaning and importance of Judaism.

## **Chapter 4. Financial Well-Being, Health and Special Needs**

This chapter examines the living conditions of Baltimore Jewish households, in particular with regard to economic well-being, economic hardship, and health and social service concerns.

## **Chapter 5. Jewish Children**

This chapter discusses Jewish children and families as well as participation in Jewish education.

## **Chapter 6. Synagogue and Ritual Life**

This chapter discusses synagogue membership and levels of participation in Jewish ritual life.

## **Chapter 7. Social and Community Life**

This chapter discusses membership and involvement in organizational, social, and personal Jewish life as well as volunteering and philanthropy.

## **Chapter 8. Israel**

This chapter describes frequency and types of travel to Israel and other markers of Israel connection.

## **Chapter 9. In the Words of Community Members**

The concluding chapter uses comments from survey respondents to summarize key findings of the study and make recommendations for the future.

# **REPORT APPENDICES**

The appendices, available in a separate document, include:

## **Appendix A. Methodological Appendix**

Details of data collection and analysis.

## **Appendix B. Comparison Charts**

Detailed cross-tabulations of all survey data for key subgroups of the population.

**Appendix C. Latent Class Analysis**

Details of the latent class analysis method that was used to develop the Index of Jewish Engagement.

**Appendix D. Survey Instrument and Codebook**

Details of survey questions and conditions, along with the original weighted responses.

**Appendix E. Study Documentation**

Copies of the recruitment materials and training documents used with the call center.

**Appendix F. Anne Arundel County**

Description of the Anne Arundel County residents who affiliate with Baltimore-area Jewish organizations.

## CHAPTER 2

# DEMOGRAPHIC SNAPSHOT

### CHAPTER HIGHLIGHTS

Understanding the character, behavior, and attitudes of members of the Baltimore Jewish community requires knowledge of the size, geographic distribution, and basic socio-demographic characteristics of the community. The ways in which members of Jewish households identify and engage with Judaism and the community all vary significantly based upon who they are, where they live, their household composition, their ages, and their Jewish backgrounds. This demographic overview describes the size of the community and the basic characteristics of community members.

- The Baltimore Jewish community numbers approximately 115,500 adults and children living in 46,700 Jewish households. These households include:
  - ♦ 74,900 Jewish adults
  - ♦ 20,500 Jewish children
  - ♦ 18,000 non-Jewish adults
  - ♦ 2,000 non-Jewish children
- The mean age of Jewish adults in Baltimore is 50, similar to the national Jewish population. The mean age of all Jews in Baltimore, including children, is 41.
- Twenty-six percent of Jewish households in Baltimore include children under age 18.
- The plurality of the Jewish population, 22%, lives in the Pikesville area, followed by 15% in Park Heights/Cheswolde. These areas, plus the Mt. Washington neighborhood, include 40% of the Jewish population of Baltimore.
- Young adults (ages 18-34) disproportionately live in the City of Baltimore compared to older Jewish adults. Very few Jewish adults ages 80 or older live in Carroll and Harford Counties.

#### Jewish population estimate

<b>The Baltimore Jewish Community Population Estimates, 2019</b>	
Total people in Jewish households	115,500
Total Jewish households	46,700
Total Jews	95,400
Adults	
Jewish	74,900
Non-Jewish	18,000
Children	
Jewish	20,500
Non-Jewish	2,000

- Compared to the national Jewish population, the Baltimore Jewish community is more Orthodox and non-denominational, and less Reform. However, there are roughly equal shares of Jewish adults who identify with the three major denominations: Orthodox (21%), Conservative (19%), and Reform (18%).
- The individual intermarriage rate (i.e., the proportion of married Jewish adults with a non-Jewish spouse) is 29%, far lower than the national intermarriage rate of 44%.

## JEWISH POPULATION ESTIMATE

The present community study estimates that the Baltimore Jewish community numbers approximately 115,500 adults and children living in 46,700 Jewish households. These households include 95,400 Jewish individuals (see below for definitions). From 2010 to 2019, the number of households grew by 11% (excluding Harford County, 8%), and the number of Jewish individuals increased by 4% (excluding Harford County, < 1%).<sup>6</sup>

In the City of Baltimore, and Baltimore, Carroll, and Harford Counties, the total population in 2018 (the most recent data available) was about 1,853,000 people. Approximately 5.1% of residents of the catchment area are Jewish, compared with approximately 2.2% of the population of the United States. The regional population growth from 2010 to 2018 was 1%, similar to the rate of growth in the Jewish population. A more appropriate comparison, however, is that of the Jewish community to the non-Hispanic white college-educated population ages 25 and older, which increased across the area by approximately 13% between 2010 and 2018.<sup>7</sup> 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.

## JEWISH ADULTS

Estimates of the size of the Jewish population rest on a set of fundamental questions about who is counted as Jewish for the purposes of the study. Recent surveys, such as the Pew Research Center's 2013 study, *A Portrait of Jewish Americans*, classify respondents according to their responses to a series of screening 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 the answers to these questions, Jews have been categorized as "Jews by religion" (JBR)—if they respond to a question about religion by stating that they are solely Jewish—and "Jews of no religion" (JNR)—if their religion is not Judaism, but they consider themselves Jewish through some other means. Jews by religion tend to be more engaged with Judaism than Jews of no religion, but many JBRs and JNRs look similar in terms of Jewish behaviors and attitudes. For the purposes of this study, and to ensure that Baltimore's Jewish community could be compared to the population nationwide, a variant of Pew's scheme was employed, supplemented by several other measures of identity. Included in the Jewish population are those adults who indicate they are Jewish and another religion; we refer to this category as "Jews of multiple religions" (JMR).

Among Jewish adults in Baltimore, 78% (58,600 individuals) identify as Jewish by religion (JBR). This proportion is similar to that of the overall United States Jewish population as reported by Pew (78%).<sup>8</sup> Of the remaining Jewish adults, 17% (12,600 individuals) identify as Jews of no religion (JNR), and 5% (3,800 individuals) identify as Jews of multiple religions (JMR).<sup>9</sup>

## DEFINITIONS

**Jewish households** are households that include at least one Jewish adult.

**Jewish adults** are those who say they are currently Jewish and either have at least one Jewish parent, were raised Jewish, or converted to Judaism. They include three groups:

**Jewish by religion (JBR):** Indicate their religion is Jewish.

**Jews of no religion (JNR):** Indicate they have no religion but are ethnically or culturally Jewish.

**Jews of multiple religions (JMR):** Either they consider themselves having two religions, Jewish and another religion, or they have another religion but also consider themselves ethnically or culturally Jewish.

**Non-Jewish adults** include three groups:

**Jewish background:** Those who report that they had a Jewish parent or were raised Jewish, but do not consider themselves currently Jewish in any way.

**Jewish affinity:** Those who consider themselves Jewish but were not born to Jewish parents, were not raised Jewish, and did not convert. Many in this group are married to Jewish adults.

**Not Jewish:** Do not consider themselves Jewish and have no Jewish background.

**Jewish children** are classified based on how they are being raised by their parents.

**Jewish by religion (JBR):** Parents say they are raising their children Jewish by religion.

**Jews of no religion (JNR):** Parents say they are raising their children culturally Jewish.

**Jews of multiple religions (JMR):** Parents say they are raising their children as Jewish and another religion.

**Non-Jewish children** are children being raised with no religion or a religion other than Judaism, or whose parents have not yet decided on a religion.

**No religion:** Parents say they are raising their children with no religion.

**Not yet decided:** Parents say they have not yet decided how they will raise their children in terms of religion. This response is most commonly provided for children who are too young to enroll in religious education.

**Another religion:** Parents say they are raising their children in a religion other than Judaism.

## JEWISH HOUSEHOLDS

Jewish households are defined as households that include at least one Jewish adult. Baltimore's Jewish population resides in 46,700 households. (Table 2.1). This number represents an increase of 11% since 2010.<sup>10</sup>

Including adults and children, 115,500 individuals<sup>11</sup> reside in Jewish households. This total includes 74,900 Jewish adults and 20,500 Jewish children as well as 18,000 non-Jewish adults and 2,000 non-Jewish children.

Table 2.1 Jewish population of Greater Baltimore, summary (rounded to nearest 100)

	2019	2010 <sup>12</sup>	Change 2010 to 2019
Households with at least one Jewish adult	46,700	42,200	11%
Total Jewish adults and children	95,400	92,100	4%
Total people in Jewish households	115,500	111,500	4%

## PEOPLE IN JEWISH HOUSEHOLDS

For the purposes of this study, all adults and children in Jewish households have been classified according to their Jewish identity (see box on page 17 for definitions). As shown in Table 2.2, the largest population growth in Jewish households appears in the increased number of non-Jewish adults who live in those households. This trend corresponds to the increase in intermarriage, as discussed below.

Table 2.2 Jewish population of Greater Baltimore, detail

	2019	2010	Change 2010 to 2019
Jewish adults	74,900	71,100	5%
JBR adults	58,600		
JNR adults	12,600		
JMR adults	3,800		
Non-Jewish adults in Jewish households	18,000	13,100	37%
Jewish background	1,200		
Jewish affinity	1,600		
Not Jewish	15,200		
Jewish children in Jewish households	20,500	21,000	-2%
JBR children	14,400		
JNR children	4,500		
JMR children	1,600		
Non-Jewish children in Jewish households	2,000	*13	
No religion	1,600		
Not yet decided	200		
Other religion	200		

Note: Rounded to nearest 100; sums may not add up to total due to rounding.



## AGE AND GENDER COMPOSITION

The age composition of the Baltimore Jewish community is generally similar to that of the US Jewish community as a whole. Compared to the national Jewish population, the local Jewish community has more adults between ages 65-79 (Table 2.3a). The mean age of Jewish adults in Baltimore is 50 and the median is 51; similarly, the national median age of Jewish adults is 50.<sup>14</sup> Including children in the analysis lowers the mean age. The mean age of all Baltimore Jewish individuals is 41 and the median is 44.

Because of the higher birth rates among Orthodox Jews, it is often assumed that the non-Orthodox Jewish population is, on average, older when Orthodox Jews are included. Table 2.3b displays the ages of non-Orthodox Jews in Baltimore in 2019 and in the United States in 2013. The apparent differences in the ages of Baltimore's non-Orthodox Jews compared to the overall Jewish community of the United States are not statistically significant.

The age-gender pyramid shows the distribution of Jews in Baltimore (Figure 2.1). The largest

**Table 2.3a. Age of Jewish individuals in Baltimore and the United States**

	<b>Baltimore 2019 (%)</b>	<b>US Jewish community* (%)</b>
Age 0-17	22	26
Age 18-34	14	21
Age 35-49	18	16
Age 50-64	27	20
Age 65-79	16	13
Age 80 +	3	5

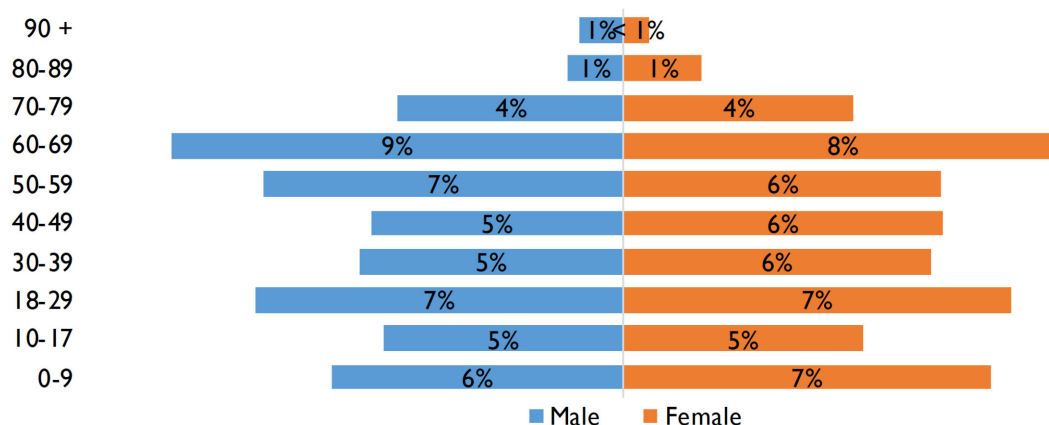
\* Source: Pew 2013

**Table 2.3b. Age of non-Orthodox Jewish individuals in Baltimore and the United States**

	<b>Baltimore 2019 (%)</b>	<b>US Jewish community* (%)</b>
Age 0-17 <sup>15</sup>	17	23
Age 18-34	12	20
Age 35-49	19	16
Age 50-64	32	22
Age 65-79	16	13
Age 80 +	4	5

\* Source: Pew 2013

**Figure 2.1. Age-gender distribution of Jews in Baltimore**



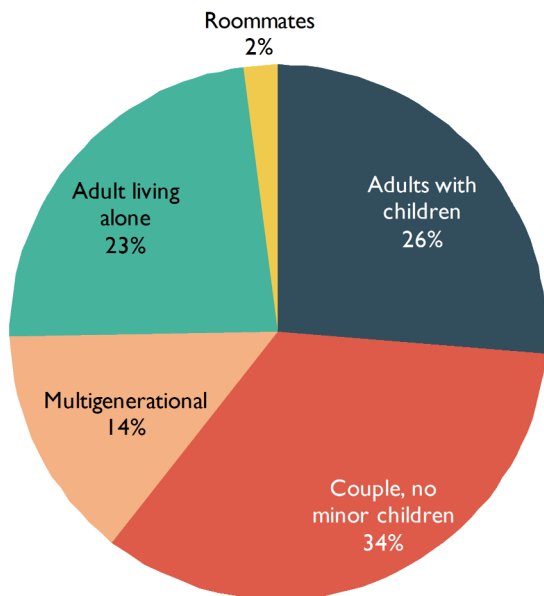
share of Jewish individuals is between the ages 60-69, followed by those ages 50-59 and 0-9. Overall, the Baltimore Jewish community has more females than males (52% and 48%, respectively), with less than 1% of adults identifying as a gender other than male or female. Gender is fairly evenly distributed across all age groups.

## HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION

Households with children under age 18 (including single-parent, two-parent, or multigenerational households) make up 26% of Jewish households in Baltimore (Figure 2.2). The mean household size is 2.5 individuals. Among households with children, the mean number of children ages 17 and younger is 1.8.

Couples without children constitute 34% of households. Multigenerational households, constituting 14% of households, are defined as parents and adult children of any age living together. This category can include adults who are living with children in their 20s or adults living with a parent in their 80s. Twenty-three percent of households include an adult living alone: 13% are seniors ages 80 and older, 30% are seniors ages 65-79, 22% are ages 50-64, 14% are ages 35-49, and the remaining 22% are under age 35.

Figure 2.2. Household composition



## GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION

Aligning with, and building upon, regional definitions used in the 2010 report, the Jewish community of Baltimore can be divided among 11 regions, assigned based on ZIP code and neighborhoods. (See Appendix A for a detailed breakdown of how respondents were classified into regions.)

The plurality of the Jewish population, 22%, lives in the Pikesville area, followed by 15% in Park Heights/Cheswolde. These areas, including the Mt. Washington neighborhood, include 40% of the Jewish population.

Maps showing the distribution of Jewish households appears below (Figures 2.3, 2.4).<sup>16</sup>

**Table 2.4. Geographic distribution of the Baltimore Jewish community**

<b>Geographic region</b>	<b>Jewish households (%)</b>	<b>Jewish individuals (%)</b>	<b>All individuals (%)</b>
Pikesville	19	22	20
Roland Park/Guilford/Midtown	15	11	12
Towson/Lutherville/Timonium/I-83	13	12	13
Park Heights/Cheswolde	9	15	12
Downtown	9	6	9
Reisterstown	8	10	9
Owings Mills	7	7	6
Mt. Washington	3	3	3
Randallstown/Liberty Road	2	1	1
Other Baltimore County	7	7	8
Carroll & Harford Counties	6	6	6
Undetermined/Unknown	1	2	1

Figure 2.3. Dot density map of Jewish households, entire area

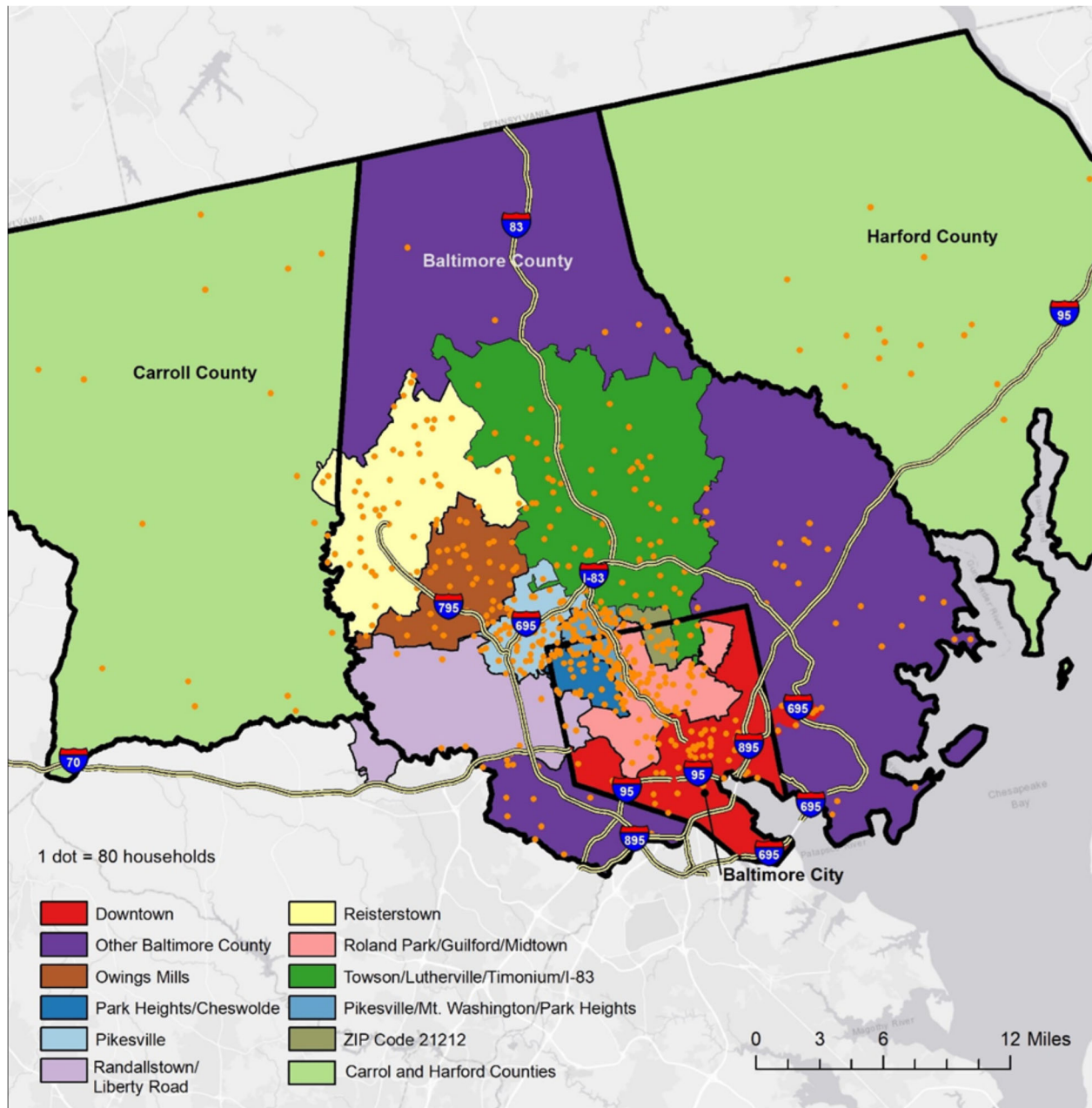
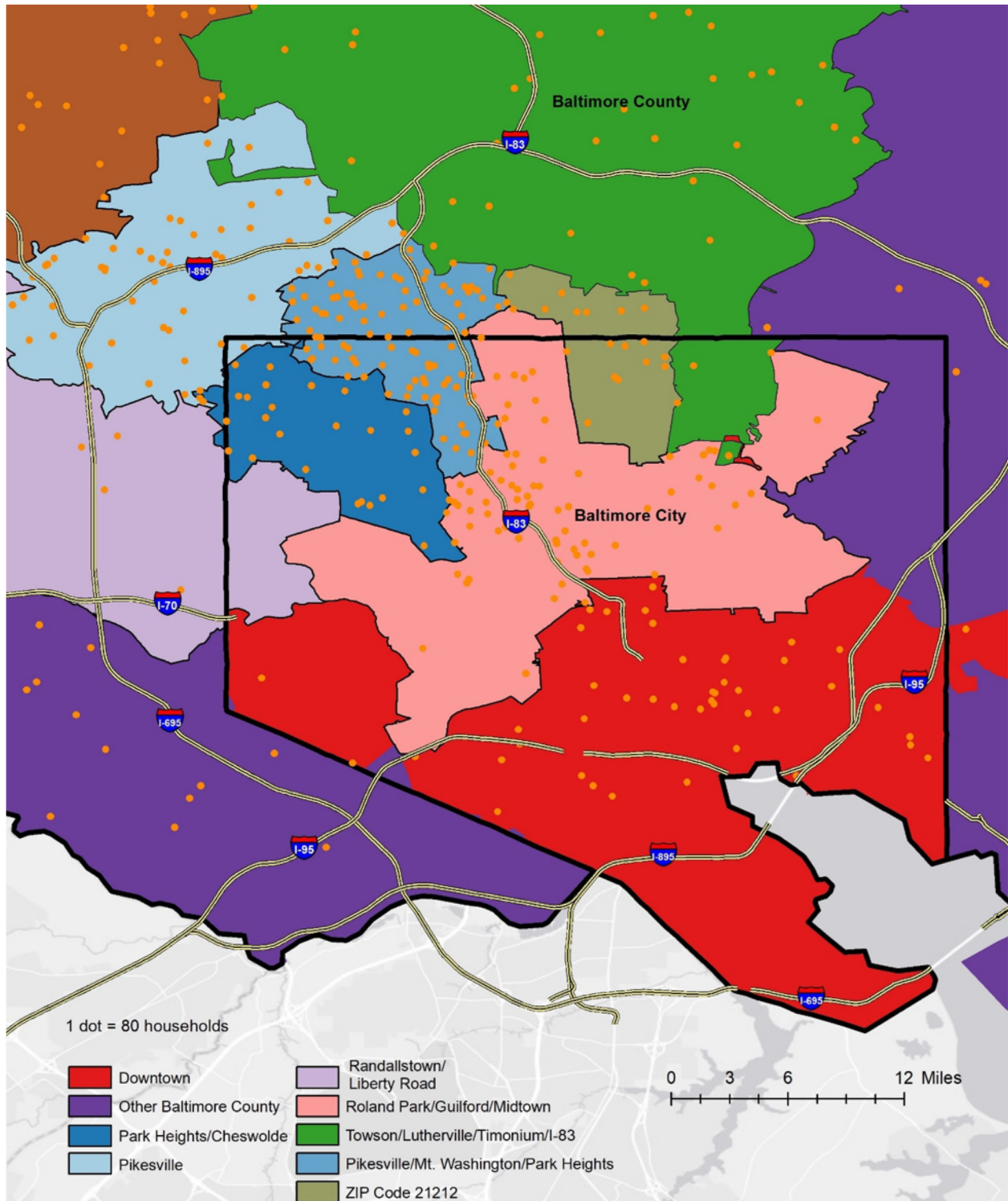


Figure 2.4. Dot density map of Jewish households, zoomed-in southern Baltimore County and City of Baltimore



The Jewish population of Baltimore can also be divided among three municipal regions: the City of Baltimore, Baltimore County, and Carroll and Harford Counties (Table 2.5). These three areas will be used throughout the report for analysis.

**Table 2.5. Geographic region of Jewish households and children**

	<b>Jewish households (%)</b>	<b>Jewish individuals (%)</b>	<b>All individuals (%)</b>
Baltimore City	37	35	36
Baltimore County	58	60	57
Carroll & Harford Counties	6	5	6
Total	100	100	100

Table 2.6 displays the distribution across the region by age. Young Jewish adults ages 18-34 disproportionately live in Baltimore City compared to older adults. Very few Jewish adults ages 80 or older live in Carroll or Harford Counties.

**Table 2.6. Geographic region of Jewish individuals by age**

	<b>All Jewish individuals (%)</b>	<b>Ages 0-17 (%)</b>	<b>Ages 18-34 (%)</b>	<b>Ages 35-49 (%)</b>	<b>Ages 50-64 (%)</b>	<b>Ages 65-79 (%)</b>	<b>Ages 80 + (%)</b>
Baltimore City	35	36	60	29	24	26	26
Baltimore County	60	59	35	67	68	68	74
Carroll & Harford Counties	5	6	6	4	7	6	< 1
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

## RESIDENCY AND LENGTH OF RESIDENCE

The Jews of Baltimore have been living in the area for an average of 34 years; those who were not born in the Baltimore area have resided there for an average of 17 years. Nearly half, 45%, of Jewish adults were raised in the Baltimore area.

There are high rates of internal mobility within the Baltimore Jewish community. Among those who have not lived in Baltimore for their entire lives, 61% have lived elsewhere in the region before their current residence. Table 2.7 shows the proportion of households whose previous home was in a different Baltimore-area region.

**Table 2.7. Internal mobility within Baltimore**

<b>Households in these regions with previous home in different Baltimore- area region</b>	<b>(%)</b>
Owings Mills	73
Reisterstown	70
Pikesville	47
Mt. Washington	47
Park Heights/Cheswolde	63
Randallstown/Liberty Road	74
Roland Park/Guilford/Midtown	86
Downtown	59
Towson/Lutherville/Timonium/I-83	74
Other Baltimore County	67
Carroll & Harford Counties	58



Among the 24% of Jewish adults who plan to move within the next three years, 23% intend to stay in their immediate area, and 33% plan to leave the Baltimore area entirely; the rest hope to find another home somewhere in the region.

## EXTENDED FAMILY IN THE REGION

One quarter of Jewish households have adult or minor children who live in another household in the Baltimore area. Twenty percent of households have adult or minor children who live outside of Baltimore. Among those ages 75 and younger, 39% have a parent living in Baltimore but in a separate household. Among those ages 50 and older, 31% have grandchildren in another Baltimore-area household, and 32% have grandchildren outside of Baltimore.

## JEWISH DENOMINATIONS

Denominational affiliation has historically been one of the primary indicators of Jewish identity and practice. There are roughly equal shares of Jewish adults who identify with the three major denominations, Orthodox (21%), Conservative (19%), and Reform (18%). Those who indicate they are secular, just Jewish, or have no specific denomination constitute 39% of Jewish adults (Table 2.8); as will be seen throughout this report, these individuals tend to engage in fewer Jewish behaviors and to be less connected to Jewish organizations than adherents to specific denominations. However, many of these individuals are deeply engaged in Jewish life. Denomination is not as predictive of behavior or affiliation as it used to be. (See Chapter 3 for a description of an Index of Jewish Engagement, which will be used throughout the report to describe demographic groups and other subgroups within the population based on their patterns of Jewish behavior.)

**Table 2.8. Denomination of Jewish adults in Baltimore in 2010 and 2019 compared to the US Jewish community**

	<b>Baltimore 2019 (%)</b>	<b>Baltimore 2010 (%)</b>	<b>US Jews (%)</b>
Orthodox	21	17	10
Conservative	19	22	18
Reform	18	27	36
Other	3	8	6
Secular/Just Jewish	39	27	30
Total	100	100	100

Compared to the national Jewish population, the Baltimore Jewish community is more Orthodox and non-denominational, and less Reform. The share of the population of Jewish adults who identify as Orthodox has grown slightly since 2010, while the share of the population of Jewish adults who identify as Reform has shrunk. The largest growth is in the share of the population of Jewish adults who identify as secular or “just Jewish.”

When children ages 0-17 are included in the analysis, the share of the population that is Orthodox increases, and the share that identifies as secular or with no particular denomination decreases (Table 2.9). Consistent with a population that includes a large share of Orthodox Jews, younger adults are most likely to identify with a particular denomination, and 41% of Jewish children are being raised by parents or guardians who identify as Orthodox.

Table 2.9. Age by denomination of Jewish individuals

	All Jews (%)	Jewish adults (%)	Ages 0-17 (%)	Ages 18-34 (%)	Ages 35-49 (%)	Ages 50-64 (%)	Ages 65-79 (%)	Ages 80 + (%)
Orthodox	27	21	41	34	18	15	18	18
Conservative	20	19	13	14	15	20	24	32
Reform	19	18	16	18	19	17	16	20
Other	2	3	1	3	2	4	3	1
Secular	32	39	28	30	46	44	39	30
Just Jewish	14	18	13	8	19	23	14	21
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

## INMARRIAGE AND INTERMARRIAGE

Among all Jewish households in Baltimore, 68% include a couple who is married, engaged, or partnered. Of these couples, 55% are inmarried and 45% are intermarried. Four percent of couples in Baltimore include someone who converted to Judaism.

### Inmarriage and intermarriage definitions

**Inmarried** couples include two partners who are currently Jewish, regardless of whether they were born Jewish or converted.

**Intermarried** couples include one partner who is currently Jewish and one partner who is not.

The intermarriage rate is lower than the national average (Table 2.10).

The individual intermarriage rate (i.e., the proportion of married Jewish adults with a non-Jewish spouse) is 29%, far lower than the national individual intermarriage rate of 44%. Regarding individual Jewish adults (Table 2.11), 77% currently have a spouse or partner with whom they live. Because social norms among those who are less religiously observant trend toward delayed marriage, it can be expected that, as more adults ages 23-34 marry, the intermarriage rate among this age cohort will increase.



Table 2.10. Marriage, inmarriage, and intermarriage rates of Baltimore Jewish households and of the US Jewish community

	<b>Baltimore 2019 (%)</b>	<b>US Jewish community* (%)</b>
Married	68	51
Inmarried	55	36
Intermarried	45	64
Total	100	100

\* Source: Reanalysis of Pew 2013

Table 2.11. Age of Jewish respondent by inmarriage and intermarriage (includes engaged couples and partners who live together)

	<b>Overall (%)</b>	<b>Ages 23-34 (%)</b>	<b>Ages 35-49 (%)</b>	<b>Ages 50-64 (%)</b>	<b>Ages 65-79 (%)</b>	<b>Ages 80 + (%)</b>
Married/ partnered Jewish adults	77	74	87	84	77	58
Inmarried	71	72	67	66	80	91
Intermarried	29	28	33	34	20	9
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

## SUBPOPULATIONS

One-in-ten Jewish households in Baltimore include at least one individual who identifies as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer. These LGBTQ individuals are not all Jewish, however. Among Jewish adults, 4% identify as LGBTQ. Households with an LGBTQ member were asked the extent to which they feel the Baltimore Jewish community is welcoming to LGBTQ individuals. While 40% do not have an opinion, 32% feel the community is “somewhat” or “very much” welcoming.

Approximately eight percent of Jewish adults in Baltimore identify with a racial category other than non-Hispanic white.<sup>18</sup>

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## CHAPTER 3

# PATTERNS OF JEWISH ENGAGEMENT

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### CHAPTER HIGHLIGHTS

Just as the Baltimore Jewish community is diverse demographically, so too is there a variety of types of Jewish identification and means of engagement in Jewish life. Examining the ways in which Jewish adults not only view, but also enact their Jewish identities is necessary to understand the population and the ways in which Jewish life in the region can be enhanced. This chapter presents and discusses an “Index of Jewish Engagement,” created uniquely for the Baltimore Jewish community.

- The Index focuses on Jewish behaviors—the ways in which individuals occupy and involve themselves in Jewish life—not on self-defined identities.
- Engagement groups include people of all ages and of all denominational identities.
- The Index identifies opportunities to improve communal planning based on people’s different needs and interests.
- The following figure illustrates the distribution of the Baltimore Jewish population along the five categories of Jewish engagement identified in the community.
- Five distinct patterns of behavior emerge from the data:
  - ◆ Familial (16% of Jewish adults): Characterized by participation in family and home-based dimensions of Jewish life.
  - ◆ Personal (19% of Jewish adults): Characterized by participation primarily in Jewish activities that can be done individually. Less active in communal and ritual activities.
  - ◆ Involved (12% of Jewish adults): Characterized by participation in most aspects of Jewish life at a moderate level.
  - ◆ Communal (26% of Jewish adults): Characterized by participation in communal and personal activities.
  - ◆ Immersed (27% of Jewish adults): Characterized by high rates of participation in all aspects of Jewish life.

## INDEX OF JEWISH ENGAGEMENT

One of the purposes of this Index is to serve as a single metric representing the full range of participation in Jewish life. Throughout the remainder of this report, we present data about individual measures of Jewish engagement, such as synagogue membership or program participation. A review of all of these individual measures does not reveal the relationships among them. For example, some subgroups have high levels of participation in ritual behavior but lower participation in communal behavior, while other subgroups have the opposite pattern. How can these subgroups be compared to one another? The Index presented in this chapter consolidates many of the individual measures so that the pattern of relationships among the behaviors can be identified. In addition, the Index creates the opportunity for behavior-based market segmentation. Each group can be considered separately for identifying interests and unmet needs that will guide the development of targeted programs and initiatives.

In the Baltimore Jewish community, we identified five categories of Jewish engagement that describe patterns of participation in Jewish life. The chapter explains how we created these categories and describes the most prevalent Jewish behaviors and attitudes in each grouping.

## BACKGROUND: CLASSIFICATIONS OF JEWISH IDENTITY

The best-known system to categorize Jewish identity is denominational affiliation. Jewish denominational categories, at least in the past, closely correlated with measures of Jewish engagement, including behaviors and attitudes.<sup>19</sup>

However, because these labels are self-assigned, their meaning varies from one individual to another. In addition, an increasing number of Jews do not affiliate with any specific denomination (30% of US Jews in 2013).<sup>20</sup> Thus, denominational labels are limited in their ability to convey Jewish behavior and attitudes.

## MEASURES OF JEWISH ENGAGEMENT

We specifically designed the Index of Jewish Engagement to identify opportunities for increased engagement for groups with different needs and interests.<sup>21</sup>

The Index focuses on behaviors—the ways in which individuals occupy and involve themselves in Jewish life. Such behaviors are concrete and measurable expressions of Jewish identity. Behaviors, in many cases, correlate with demographic characteristics, background, and attitudes, but also cut across them. Jewish adults’ decisions to take part in activities may reflect the value and meaning they find in these activities, the priority they place on them, the level of skills and resources that enable them to participate, and the opportunities available and known to them.

To develop the Index, we selected a range of Jewish behaviors that were included in the survey instrument. The set of Jewish behaviors used to develop the typology are inclusive of the different ways—public and private—that contemporary Jews engage with Jewish life. Some of the activities are located primarily within institutions (e.g., synagogue membership), while others are home-based (e.g., Passover seders). These behaviors are classified into four dimensions of Jewish life: family and home-based practices, ritual practices, personal activities, and organizational participation. The behavioral measures include:

- **Family holiday celebrations:** Participating in a Passover seder and lighting Hanukkah candles. (Family holiday celebrations are practiced by many US Jews for religious and other reasons, e.g., social, familial, cultural, and ethnic. In contrast to High Holiday services, these can be practiced at home without institutional affiliation.)
- **Ritual practices:** Keeping kosher, lighting Shabbat candles or having a Shabbat dinner, attending religious services, attending High Holiday services, fasting on Yom Kippur
- **Communal activities:** Belonging to a synagogue, belonging to a Jewish organization or group, attending Jewish activities, volunteering for Jewish organizations, donating to Jewish causes.
- **Personal activities:** Engaging in cultural activities (book, music, TV, museum), following news about Israel, accessing Jewish content online (websites, podcasts, etc.), reading Jewish organization’s material.

### How we developed these categories

Survey respondents answered questions about their Jewish behaviors; based on their responses, we identified the five primary patterns of behavior that are presented here. Survey respondents were **not** asked to assign themselves to the groups.

The LCA analysis presented here is unique to the Baltimore Jewish community. Both the set of classifications and their names are derived directly from data collected for this study.

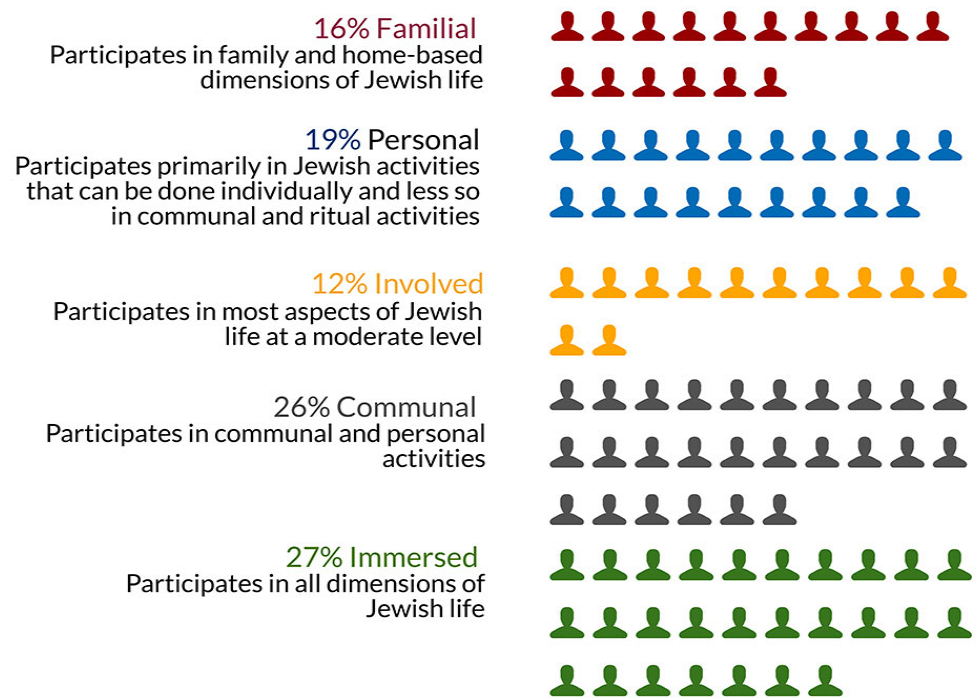
We employed a statistical tool, latent class analysis (LCA), to cluster similar patterns of behavior based on respondents’ answers to survey questions. LCA identifies groups of behaviors that “cluster” together by analyzing patterns of responses. The result of the LCA analysis was the identification of five unique patterns of Jewish engagement.

Using LCA, each Jewish adult in the community was classified into one of the five engagement groups according to the pattern that most closely matches the individual’s participation in different types of Jewish behaviors. For purposes of this report, the names of the engagement groups will be used to refer to the groups of Jewish adults who most closely adhere to each pattern. The names of the groups are intended to highlight the behaviors that distinguish each group from the others.

## PATTERNS OF JEWISH ENGAGEMENT

Jewish adults of Baltimore can be clustered into one of five groups, each with similar patterns of behavior. The patterns are summarized in Figure 3.1 and described below. Table 3.1 shows, for each pattern, the level of participation in each of the 17 behaviors that were used to construct the Index of Jewish Engagement. As shown in Figure 3.1, the groups vary widely in size.

Figure 3.1. Patterns of Jewish Engagement



## JEWISH BEHAVIORS AND JEWISH ENGAGEMENT

The five patterns differ in degree and types of engagement with a broad set of Jewish behaviors. As shown in Table 3.1, the Jewish behaviors across the five engagement patterns vary widely, but all patterns include at least some behaviors that represent a connection to Jewish life. The table shows the proportion of people in each engagement group who engage in the listed behavior. In this table, the darker the box, the higher the proportion of people who engage in that behavior.

The highest level of engagement is found in the 27% of Jewish adults who are in the **“Immersed”** group. Almost all of the listed behaviors are practiced by nearly everyone in that group. The 26% of Jewish adults in the **“Communal”** group are similar to the Immersed group, but with somewhat lower rates of engagement on most measures. On the other end of the scale, the lowest level of engagement is found in the 16% who are included in the **“Familial”** group. Fewer than half of the members of this group attended Passover seders or lit Hanukkah candles.

Jewish adults in the two remaining groups have moderate levels of Jewish engagement. Those in the **“Personal”** group, including 19% of Jewish adults, participate to a high degree in activities that can be done individually, such as reading Jewish books and reading news about Israel. In contrast, the 12% of Jewish adults in the **“Involved”** group participate in Jewish ritual and communal life, but their participation in individual activities is lower than is the case for the Personal group.

## DEMOGRAPHICS AND JEWISH ENGAGEMENT

The patterns of engagement are associated with demographic characteristics of respondents. Tables 3.2, 3.3, and 3.4 show the distribution of selected demographic characteristics within the Jewish engagement categories. To best understand demographic patterns, it is useful to compare the distribution of each demographic category within each engagement groups to that of the overall adult Jewish population, shown in the top row of each table. This comparison indicates where each engagement group differs from the overall population. See Appendix B for a table showing the distribution of engagement groups within each demographic characteristic (i.e., column totals rather than row totals).

There are some age differences across the engagement groups (Table 3.2). The Immersed group includes the largest proportion of individuals ages 22-34 (33%). Jews ages 50-64 comprise the largest share of adults in the Familial and Personal groups.

Because Orthodox Jews are disproportionately younger (see Table 2.9), it is also worth considering how Jewish engagement and age interact solely among the non-Orthodox population. However, there are no significant differences to Table 3.2 regardless of whether Orthodox Jews are included or excluded from the analysis. (See Table 3.5 for more on denomination.)

Table 3.1. Jewish Behaviors and Jewish engagement

	Familial (%)	Personal (%)	Involved (%)	Communal (%)	Immersed (%)
% of Jewish adults	16	19	12	26	27
Family holidays					
Attended seder	40	64	96	96	100
Lit Hanukkah candles	44	66	93	97	100
Ritual practices					
Ever attended services	5	16	72	100	100
---Services monthly +	0	0	13	11	92
Attended High Holiday services	0	0	39	80	99
Fasted on Yom Kippur (incl. medical skip)	19	18	68	89	100
Kosher at home/always	2	3	7	9	82
Shabbat candles/dinner	9	27	50	75	100
---Shabbat often/frequently	0	1	18	17	86
Communal activities					
Synagogue member	0	0	21	44	98
Member of other Jewish organization	1	6	1	14	26
Donated to Jewish charity (past year)	11	39	51	83	100
Volunteered for Jewish organization	0	4	7	14	44
Attended Jewish program	1	18	36	51	72
---Program monthly +	0	3	3	14	32
Personal activities (past month)					
Jewish online material (read or streamed)	27	98	7	92	98
Read Jewish material	12	89	18	94	100
Jewish cultural activities	25	91	54	90	97
Sought Israel news	45	86	70	88	95
---News weekly +	6	41	7	33	63

Legend	0-19%	20-39%	40-59%	60-79%	80-100%
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The Immersed group has the largest share of married couples (86%; Table 3.3), and, among those who are married, the largest share who are inmarried (97%). Married couples in the Familial group include the smallest share who are inmarried (31%). Nearly half (46%) of those in the Immersed group have children, far more than in any other engagement group.

The geographic distribution by group is distinct from that of the Jewish population as a whole (Table 3.4). Between 6-10% of each engagement group lives in Carroll and Harford counties, except for the Immersed group (1%). The Immersed group is roughly evenly split between Baltimore City (48%) and Baltimore County (51%), but two thirds of the Familial group (67%) are in Baltimore County.

Table 3.2. Age by Jewish engagement

	<b>Age 23-34 (%)</b>	<b>Age 35-49 (%)</b>	<b>Age 50-64 (%)</b>	<b>Age 65-79 (%)</b>	<b>Age 80 + (%)</b>	<b>Total (%)</b>
All Jewish adults	24	21	29	21	4	100
Familial	16	22	36	25	2	100
Personal	15	21	34	27	3	100
Involved	30	30	18	18	4	100
Communal	22	20	28	25	5	100
Immersed	33	20	24	19	4	100

Table 3.3. Marriage and children by Jewish engagement

	<b>Married (%)</b>	<b>Inmarried (of married; %)</b>	<b>Has children (%)</b>
All Jewish adults	77	71	30
Familial	73	31	19
Personal	74	52	20
Involved	82	70	32
Communal	72	80	27
Immersed	86	97	46

Table 3.4. Residence by Jewish engagement

	<b>Baltimore City (%)</b>	<b>Baltimore County (%)</b>	<b>Carroll &amp; Harford Counties (%)</b>	<b>Total (%)</b>
All Jewish adults	34	60	6	100
Familial	24	67	10	100
Personal	39	55	6	100
Involved	27	63	10	100
Communal	30	65	6	100
Immersed	48	51	1	100

## JEWISH BACKGROUND AND JEWISH ENGAGEMENT

The following tables describe the Jewish identity and Jewish backgrounds of those in each Jewish engagement category. Tables 3.5, and 3.6 show the distribution of selected Jewish identity characteristics within each of the Jewish engagement categories (row totals) in comparison to the overall Jewish adult population (first row). See Appendix B for a table showing the distribution of engagement groups within each demographic characteristic (i.e., column totals rather than row totals).

Jewish denomination corresponds closely to Jewish engagement but is not identical (Table 3.5). Nearly 80% each of the Familial and Personal groups have no specific denomination. The Immersed group is made up of far more Orthodox Jews (69%) than any other group, but there are still some of its members (6%) with no specific denomination. Similarly, although the Familial group consists mostly of people who identify with no specific denomination (79%), it includes adherents to each of the other denominational groups as well, including Orthodox Jews (1%).

An individual's Jewish background (Table 3.6) is associated with Jewish engagement in adulthood. Large majorities of individuals in all groups were raised by two Jewish parents. Nearly three quarters (73%) of all Jews had some Jewish schooling in childhood, but only 52% of the Personal and 59% of the Familial groups had Jewish schooling, compared to 91% of the Immersed group.

Table 3.5. Denomination by Jewish engagement<sup>23</sup>

Denomination	Orthodox (%)	Conservative (%)	Reform (%)	Other (%)	None (%)	Total (%)
All Jewish adults	21	19	18	3	39	100
Familial	1	5	14	1	79	100
Personal	1	6	13	3	77	100
Involved	7	19	38	1	35	100
Communal	6	35	29	6	23	100
Immersed	69	19	5	2	6	100

Table 3.6. Jewish background by Jewish engagement

Jewish background	Parents inmarried (%)	Attended Jewish school (%)
All Jewish adults	83	73
Familial	78	59
Personal	74	52
Involved	73	70
Communal	85	77
Immersed	93	91

## ATTITUDES ABOUT BEING JEWISH AND JEWISH ENGAGEMENT

Just as Jewish behaviors vary across the engagement groups, so too do attitudes about being Jewish. The figures below show responses to a set of attitudinal questions that illustrate the differences among the groups. As is evident from Figures 3.2 and 3.3, majorities of all groups consider Judaism to be a matter of ethnicity and are nearly universal in thinking it a matter of culture. Interestingly, similar shares of the Familial (18%) and Immersed (17%) groups do not think that being Jewish is a matter of ethnicity. However, the Familial group values the cultural aspects of Judaism less strongly than do the other groups, with 29% saying it is “very much” a matter of culture.

Figure 3.2. Being Jewish is a matter of ethnicity

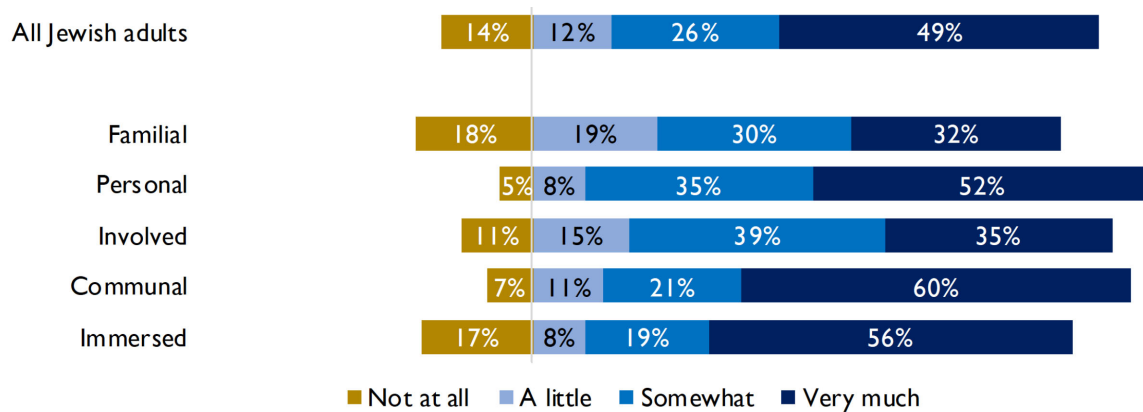
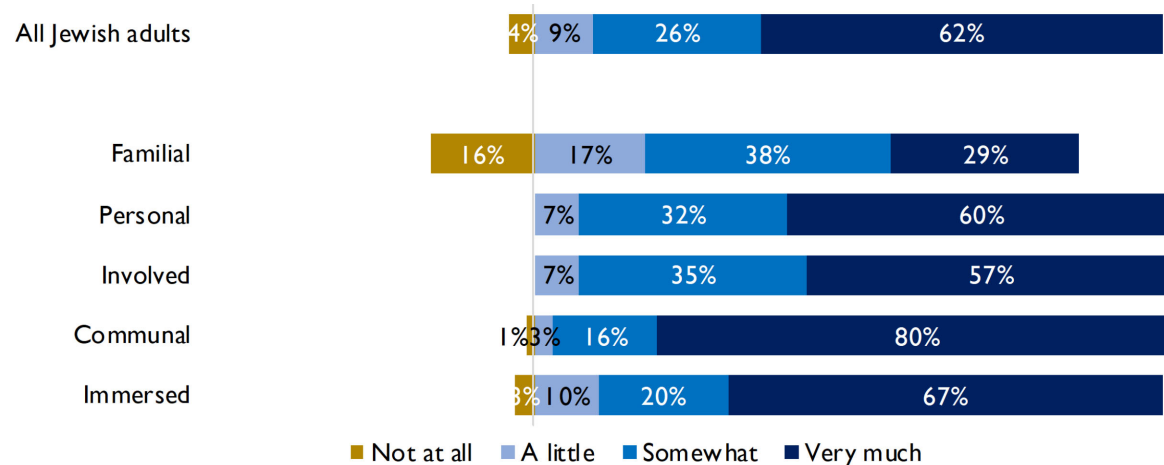
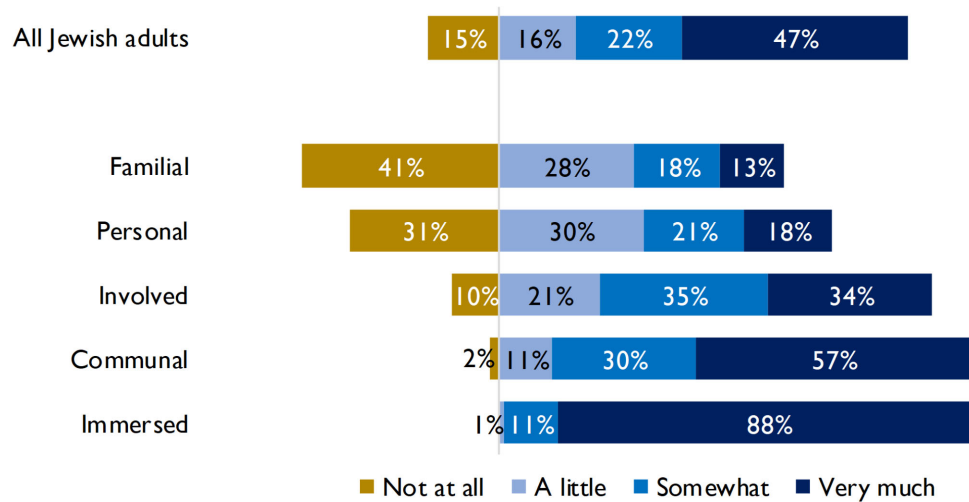


Figure 3.3. Being Jewish is a matter of culture



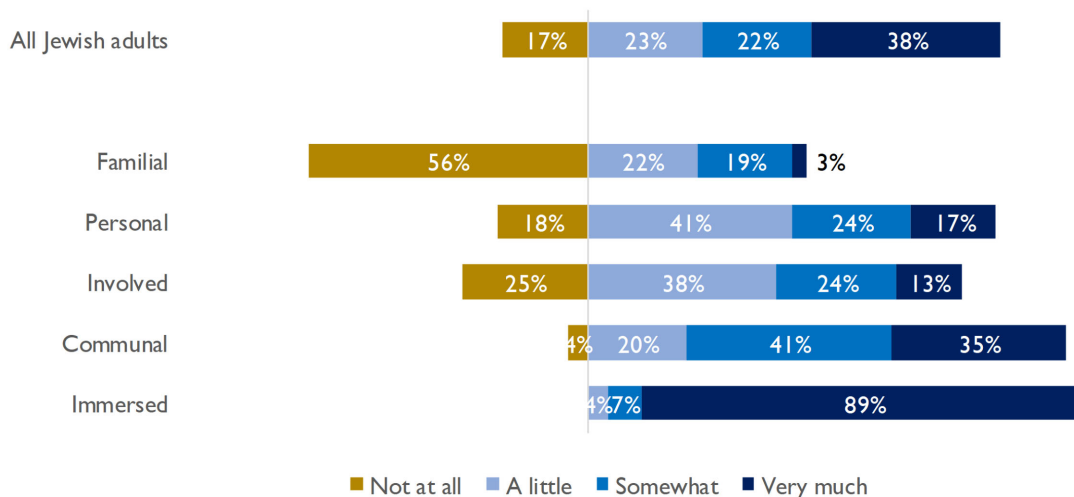
With respect to the religious aspects of Judaism (Figure 3.4), there are larger differences in the engagement groups. A large majority of the Immersed group considers Judaism to be a matter of religion (88% “very much”), along with 57% of the Communal group. Forty-one percent of the Familial group and 31% of the Personal group say that Judaism is “not at all” a matter of religion.

**Figure 3.4. Being Jewish is a matter of religion**



With regard to the question of whether Judaism is part of daily life (Figure 3.5), there are clear differences among the engagement groups. Among the Immersed Jews, 89% regard Judaism to be “very much” part of their daily life. Fifty-six percent of the Familial group and 25% of the Involved group say Judaism is “not at all” part of their daily life.

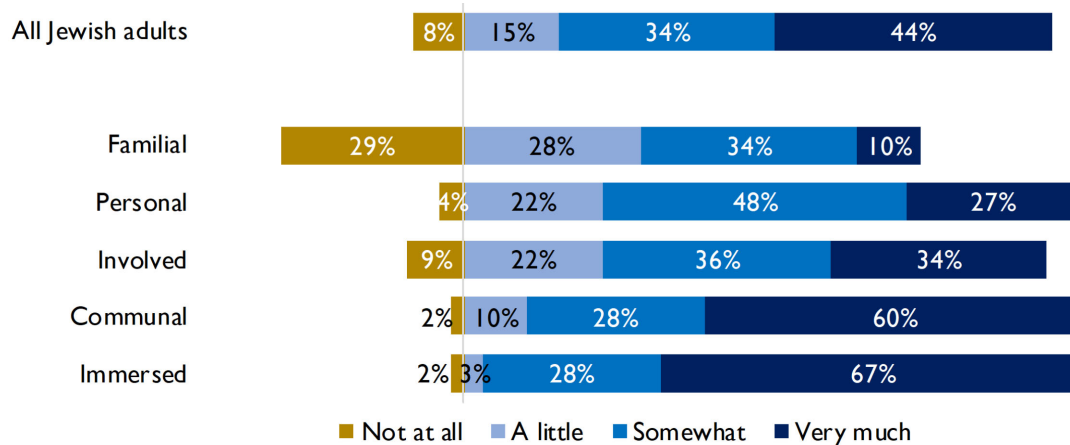
**Figure 3.5. Being Jewish is part of daily life**



## ATTITUDES ABOUT JEWISH COMMUNITY

Respondents were asked about the aspects of Jewish community they believe are most salient. Figure 3.6 displays the extent to which Jews in Baltimore believe that being Jewish is a matter of community. While few overall (8%) do not believe being Jewish is a matter of community, the Familial group had the largest percentage (29%) in this category. Conversely, two thirds of the Immersed group believe that being Jewish is “very much” a matter of community.

Figure 3.6. Being Jewish is a matter of community



Community connections vary widely across the engagement groups, but, in nearly all cases, a feeling of connection to the worldwide Jewish community (Figure 3.7) exceeds that of the local community (Figure 3.8). The lone exception is the Immersed group, for whom a feeling of connection to the worldwide and local Jewish communities is about equal, though with a slightly higher proportion (78% vs. 71%) saying they feel very connected to the local Jewish community.

Figure 3.7. Connections to worldwide Jewish community

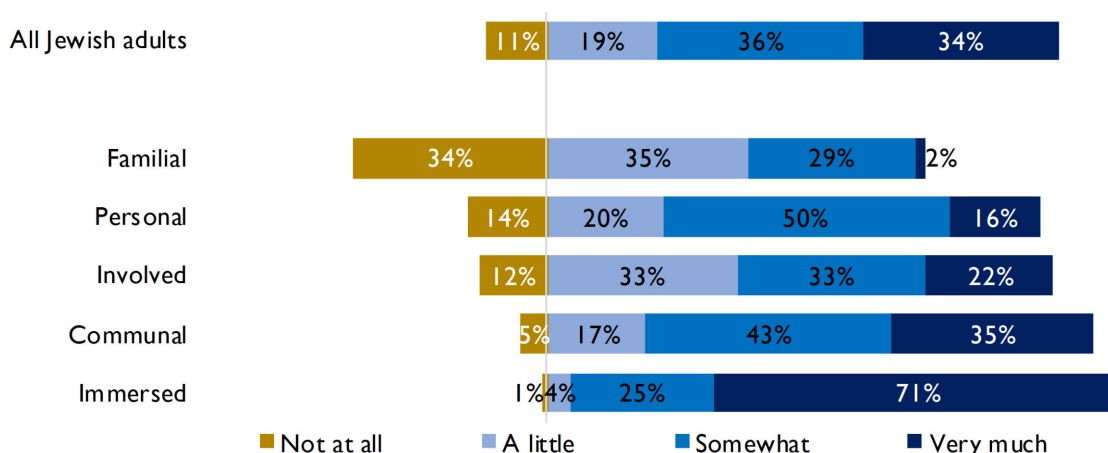
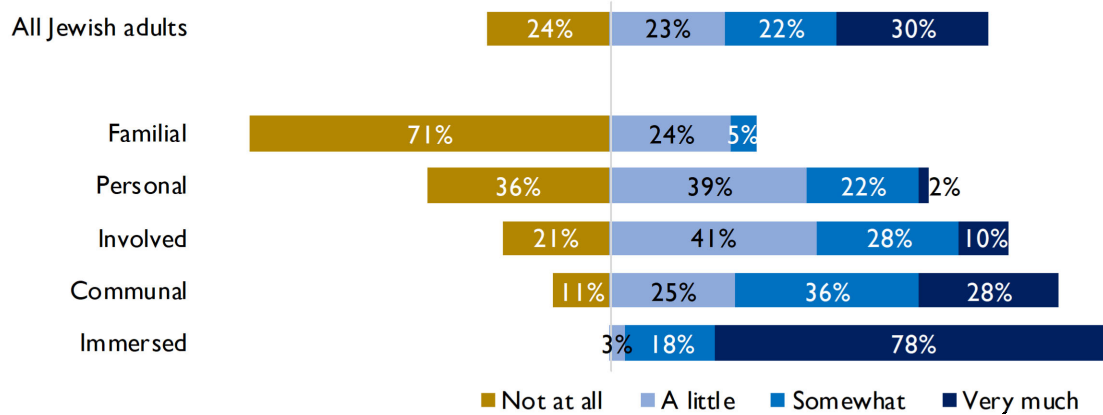


Figure 3.8. Connections to local Jewish community

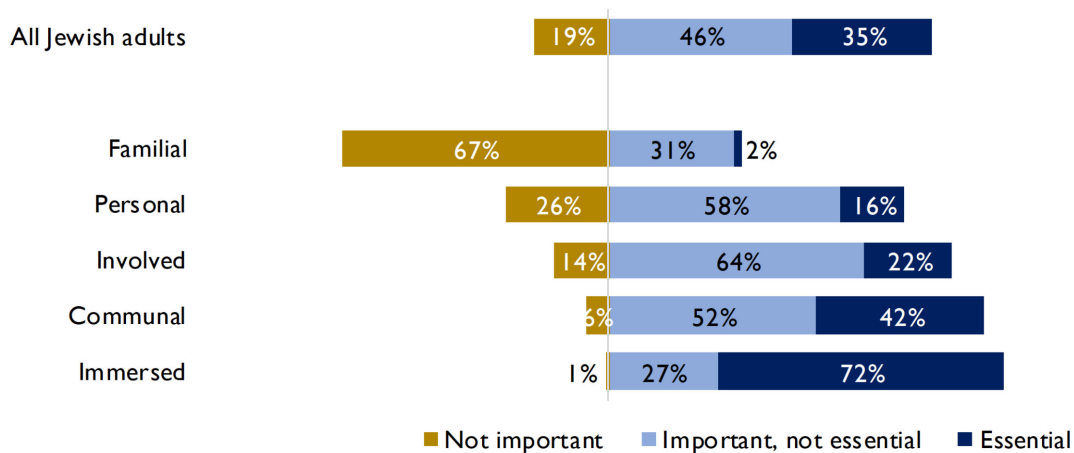


Among the Familial Jews, 34% do not feel at all connected to the worldwide Jewish community compared to 14% of the Personal Jews, 12% of the Involved, 5% of the Communal, and 1% of the Immersed.

Conversely, 71% of the Familial group do not feel at all connected to the local Jewish community, compared to 36% of the Personal group, 21% of the Involved, and 11% of the Communal. All of the Immersed group feels at least a little connected to the Baltimore Jewish community.

Finally, respondents were asked if being part of a Jewish community was essential to what it means to be Jewish (Figure 3.9). Notably, 33% of the Familial group and 74% of the Personal group—the two engagement groups that participate in the fewest communal activities—say that it is important or essential to be part of a Jewish community. This suggests that there may be opportunities for outreach within these groups.

Figure 3.9. Essential to being Jewish: Part of a Jewish community



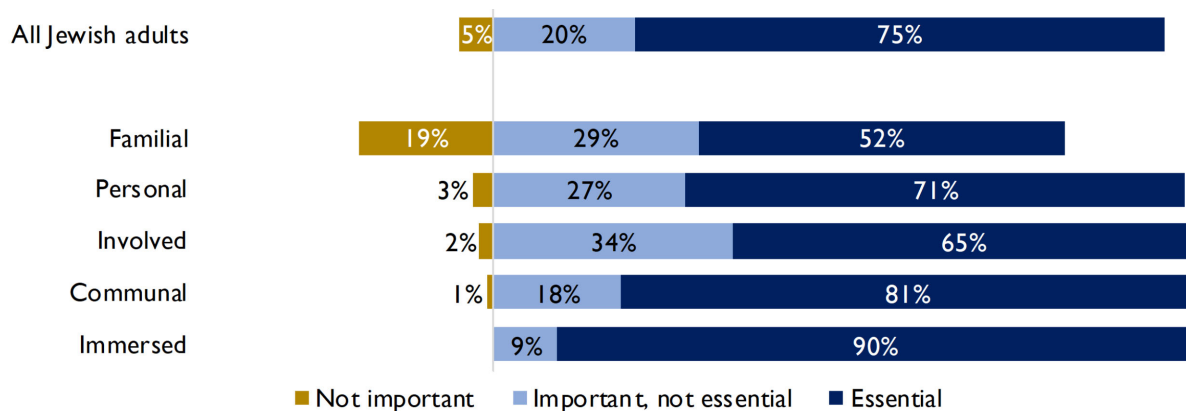
Question: How important is each of the following to what being Jewish means to you...Being part of a Jewish community?

## ESSENTIALS OF BEING JEWISH

To further explore the meaning of being Jewish, respondents were asked about whether various aspects of Judaism were an essential part of being Jewish to them. In Figures 3.10, 3.11, and 3.12, these results are presented for each engagement group.

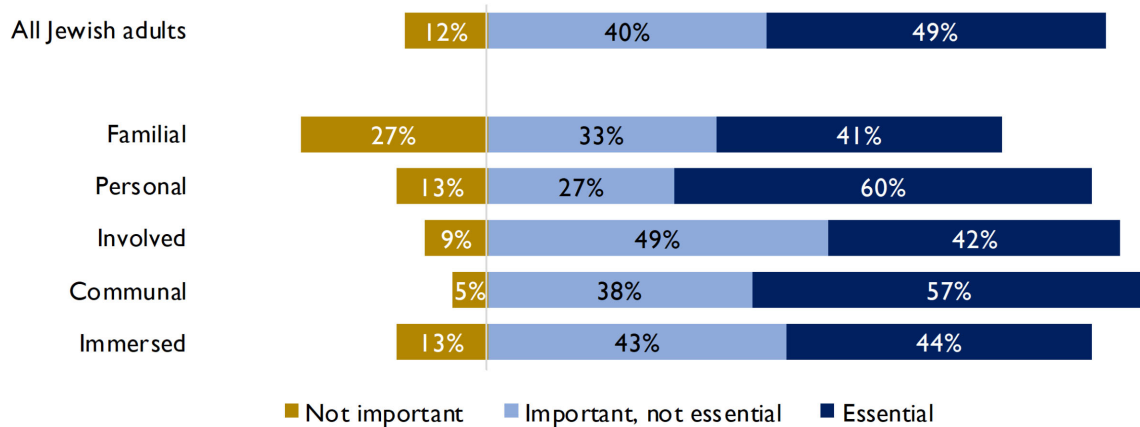
For the two dimensions “Leading a moral and ethical life” (Figure 3.10) and “Working for justice and equality” (Figure 3.11), there is a general pattern among all groups. Moving from lower to higher levels of engagement, the proportion of each group that defines these dimensions as important or essential increases. The one exception to this pattern is that more of the Immersed (13%) than the Involved (9%) or Communal (5%) groups believe that working for justice and equality is not important to being Jewish.

Figure 3.10. Essential to being Jewish: Leading an ethical and moral life



Question: How important is each of the following to what being Jewish means to you...Leading a moral and ethical life?

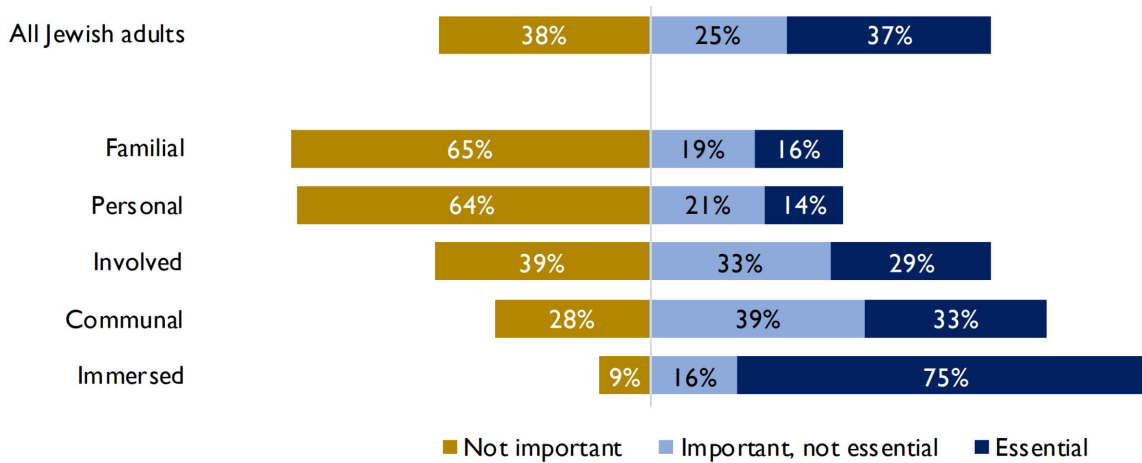
Figure 3.11. Essential to being Jewish: Working for justice and equality in society



Question: How important is each of the following to what being Jewish means to you...Working for justice and equality in society?

As would be expected, greater shares of groups that participate more frequently and more deeply in ritual Jewish practices feel that a belief in the divine or a higher power is essential to being Jewish (Figure 3.12). Three quarters of the Immersed group see belief as essential, while about two thirds of the Familial (65%) and the Personal (64%) groups do not find a belief in a divine or higher power important.

Figure 3.12. Essential to being Jewish: Belief in a divine or higher power



Question: How important is each of the following to what being Jewish means to you...Belief in a divine or higher power?



## CHAPTER 4

# FINANCIAL WELL-BEING AND HEALTH NEEDS

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### CHAPTER HIGHLIGHTS

Jewish organizations in Baltimore allocate a significant share of resources toward caring for families and individuals in need. The relative affluence of the community has provided sufficient resources to meet the needs of many. Nevertheless, it is clear that there are some unmet needs in the community.

Similar to the US Jewish population as a whole, the Baltimore Jewish community is highly educated and relatively affluent. The vast majority of households describe themselves as living comfortably or better. Nevertheless, there are a significant number of households with unmet financial and health needs, including some that have financial situations limiting their participation in Jewish life.

Many Jewish households also include someone whose activity is limited by a health condition, in some cases limiting participation in Jewish life. Some households report that they need health-related services but have not received them.

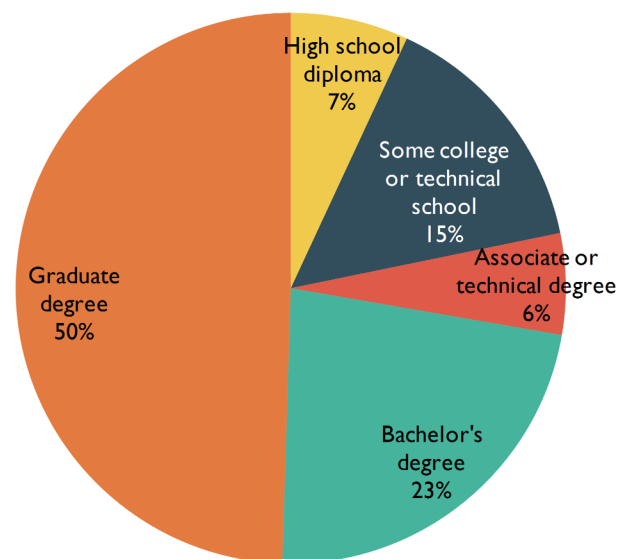
- Of Jewish adults in Baltimore, 73% have earned at least a bachelor's degree, including half with at least one post-graduate degree.
- Seventy-one percent of Jewish adults in Baltimore are working, either full (57%) or part time (14%). An additional 18% of the population is retired.
- Four percent of the community describe themselves as “prosperous,” and nearly one third of Jewish households (31%) report they are “living very comfortably.” Those who say they are “living reasonably comfortably” make up 50% of Jewish households. But 13% of Jewish households indicate they are “just getting along,” a possible indication of economic vulnerability. One percent say they are “nearly poor,” and 2% report they are “poor.”
- Respondents were also asked about life changes in the previous year that resulted in economic hardship. Overall, 18% of households report encountering such a hardship.
- Economic insecurity is felt by a substantial minority of the population. Thirty-eight percent of households are not confident in their ability to live comfortably during retirement. One quarter of households do not have enough funds to cover three months of expenses were they to face an unexpected loss of income.

- Twenty-nine percent of Jewish households in Baltimore include at least one person who is limited by some sort of health issue, special need, or disability. In 14% of households, or almost half of those with a need, the health issue causes a limitation in the ability to work, attend school, or do housework.
- Thirteen percent of Jewish households are serving as primary caregivers for a relative, separate from routine childcare.
- Eight percent of households include someone who, in the past year, was constrained by health issues from participating in the Baltimore Jewish community.

## EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT AND EMPLOYMENT

The Jewish population of Baltimore is highly educated compared to the US Jewish population as a whole, as well as compared to the overall population of the Baltimore area and the United States as a whole. Of Jewish adults in Baltimore, 73% have earned at least a bachelor's degree, including half with at least one post-graduate degree (Figure 4.1). Among Jews in the United States, over half have attained at least a bachelor's degree (58%), including 28% who have graduate degrees. In Baltimore overall, 35% of individuals ages 25 or older have at least a bachelor's degree, including 15% who have a graduate degree. In the US population overall, 30% of adults ages 25 and older hold bachelor's degrees, including 12% who hold advanced degrees.

Figure 4.1. Educational attainment



Seventy-one percent of Jewish adults in Baltimore are working, either full (57%) or part time (14%). An additional 18% of the population is retired. The remaining 11% are stay-at-home parents, unemployed, on temporary leave, or studying for a degree. Nine percent of Jewish adults, including some already with jobs, are looking for work. Among those under the age of 65, 71% are working full time, 11% are working part time, 4% are retired, and 14% are stay-at-home parents, unemployed, on temporary leave, or studying for a degree. In 2010, 62% of Jewish adults were working, 19% were retired, and 19% were not working due to being stay-at-home parents, unemployed, on temporary leave, or studying for a degree.

## ECONOMIC WELL-BEING

Overall, Jewish households in Baltimore make up an economically comfortable community. Four percent of the community describes itself as “prosperous” and nearly one third (31%) says it is “living very comfortably” (Table 4.1). Those households that report they are “living reasonably comfortably” make up 50% of the total. But 13% of Jewish households say they are “just getting along,” a possible indication of economic vulnerability, 1% say they are “nearly poor,” and 2% say they are “poor.”

There are no major differences in standard of living for households in the City of Baltimore, Baltimore County, and Carroll and Harford Counties. As would be expected, younger households are not as comfortable as older households, and households in which someone is limited by poor health, special needs, or a disability are far more likely to be struggling financially.

Among those who responded to the question about income, 48% reported household income of \$100,000 per year or greater, including 13% of Jewish households who reported household income of \$200,000 per year or greater (Table 4.2). On the lower end of the spectrum, 23% indicated their household income was less than \$50,000 per year. By contrast, data from the US Census Bureau indicate that only 7% of households in Baltimore have household incomes of \$200,000 or greater per year, and 39% have incomes under \$50,000.

Household income trends are similar to household standard of living trends.

Table 4.1. Standard of living

	<b>Prosperous (%)</b>	<b>Living very comfortably (%)</b>	<b>Living reasonably comfortably (%)</b>	<b>Just getting along, nearly poor, or poor (%)</b>
All Jewish households	4	31	50	15
<b>Engagement group</b>				
Familial	4	43	33	20
Personal	3	32	48	17
Involved	4	28	60	8
Communal	6	32	50	13
Immersed	4	21	55	19
<b>Geography</b>				
Baltimore City	5	31	47	17
Baltimore County	4	31	51	14
Carroll & Harford Counties	3	30	53	14
<b>Head of household age</b>				
23-34	2	26	60	13
35-49	3	22	61	14
50-64	4	30	47	19
65-79	6	38	41	14
80+	5	40	48	7
<b>Marital status</b>				
Inmarried	5	29	53	14
Intermarried	6	38	44	12
Not married	3	26	51	20
<b>Parent status</b>				
No children in	5	32	49	15
Children in household	4	28	51	17
<b>Household</b>				
Orthodox	3	16	54	26
Conservative	6	33	53	7
Reform	4	29	50	17
No denomination	4	37	45	14
<b>Household limitations from health issues, special needs, or disabilities</b>				
Yes	2	15	48	35
No	5	33	50	12

Table 4.2. Household income in 2018

	\$200,000 or more (%)	\$100,000-199,999 (%)	\$50,000-99,999 (%)	Less than \$50,000 (%)
All Jewish households	13	35	29	23
Engagement group				
Familial	14	37	18	31
Personal	13	32	33	22
Involved	13	36	27	24
Communal	20	32	27	22
Immersed	10	29	37	24
Geography				
Baltimore City	13	32	29	26
Baltimore County	14	37	27	22
Carroll & Harford Counties	10	36	41	13
Head of household age				
23-34	8	28	34	30
35-49	20	45	27	7
50-64	16	38	24	22
65-79	11	29	31	29
80+	5	21	34	41
Marital status				
Inmarried	19	39	30	11
Intermarried	17	49	27	7
Not married	4	16	29	51
Parent status				
No children in household	10	32	31	28
Children in household	24	41	24	12
Household denomination				
Orthodox	7	25	38	31
Conservative	19	37	28	16
Reform	14	35	25	26
No denomination	14	38	26	22
Household limitations from health issues, special needs, or disabilities				
Yes	3	16	38	43
No	15	38	27	20

## ECONOMIC INSECURITY AND POVERTY

Although the majority (85%) of Baltimore Jewish community households self-identify as living comfortably or prosperous, other households struggle with significant economic challenges. As one measure of economic need, respondents indicated whether they received government benefits or skipped necessities in the past year (Table 4.3). These benefits included Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI); Medicaid; subsidized housing; SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program); or daycare assistance. However, it is important to note that some of these benefits are not entirely restricted to low-income households (e.g., SSDI, Medicaid); accordingly, receipt of these benefits is only a possible indicator of financial need, not a definite indicator. Thirteen percent of Jewish households receive some form of public benefit.

Respondents were also asked about life changes in the previous year that resulted in economic hardship. Eighteen percent of households reported encountering such a hardship (Table 4.4). Nine percent reported a change in health, such as major illness; 8% noted a change in employment, such as a reduction in pay; 3% mentioned a change in family structure, such as divorce; and another 2% experienced a change in housing, such as foreclosure.

Financial insecurity is reflected in a lack of financial resources for emergency or future expenses. Of all households, 38% are not confident in their ability to live comfortably during retirement, including 48% of households where the head of household is between the ages of 50 and 64 and 42% of households where the head of household is between the ages of 65 and 79 and not yet retired. One quarter of households do not have enough funds to cover three months of expenses were they to face an unexpected loss of income. Seven percent could not cover a \$400 expense in full with cash on hand, money in a bank

**Table 4.3. Economic needs: Summary**

	<b>Percentage of Jewish households</b>
<b>Public benefits</b>	
Any benefit	13
Food stamps/SNAP, subsidized housing, Medicaid, or daycare assistance	8
SSDI or SSI	6
Energy or utility assistance	1
Unemployment benefits	< 1
<b>Economic hardships</b>	
Any hardship	18
Change in health	9
Change in employment	8
Change in family structure	3
Change in housing	2
<b>Financial insecurities</b>	
Not confident saving for retirement	38
Insufficient savings for three months' expenses	25
Inability to pay \$400 expense	7
Financial constraint prevented participation in Jewish life	6
Skipped rent, mortgage, or utility bill	6
Skipped medication prescription	4
Skipped or reduced a meal	1

Table 4.4. Economic insecurity by household characteristics

	Insufficient savings for three months' expenses (%)	Any economic hardship (%)	Any public benefit (%)	Skipped meal, rent, or medicine (%)	Insufficient savings for \$400 expense (%)	Financial constraint in Jewish life (%)
All Jewish households	25	18	13	7	7	6
Engagement group						
Familial	25	14	15	5	6	1
Personal	27	23	12	8	13	5
Involved	15	9	8	4	6	8
Communal	21	15	11	7	6	7
Immersed	33	24	22	9	9	10
Geography						
Baltimore City	29	22	13	10	9	7
Baltimore County	22	15	13	5	7	6
Carroll & Harford Counties	20	16	12	3	4	2
Head of household age						
23-34	31	27	15	6	4	8
35-49	38	14	7	10	15	8
50-64	26	22	16	8	10	7
65-79	14	11	15	5	4	4
80+	12	8	15	2	3	4
Marital status						
Inmarried	25	16	15	6	10	6
Intermarried	24	16	9	6	6	3
Not married	25	20	17	8	8	9
Parent status						
No children in household	22	17	13	6	6	4
Children in household	32	18	13	8	12	12
Household denomination						
Orthodox	40	25	27	11	9	10
Conservative	14	13	9	4	4	5
Reform	24	15	12	6	9	10
No denomination	22	15	10	7	9	3
Household limitations from health issues, special needs, or disabilities						
Yes	43	39	44	20	23	9
No	22	14	8	5	5	5

account, or on a credit card that could be paid off in full when they receive their next bill. Some households had to skip necessities over the last year, including 6% who could not make a rent, mortgage, or utility payment; 4% who could not fill a medication prescription; and 1% who skipped or reduced meals.

Financial barriers also present a barrier to fully participating in Jewish life. Of respondents that reported financial impediments to participation in Jewish life, 172 provided additional explanation. Synagogue dues and High Holiday tickets were described as a barrier for 102 respondents, and other membership dues and program fees were difficult to afford for 41. Respondents report:

*I can no longer afford membership at my former synagogue.*

*[I am] unable to make a full membership contribution to my synagogue. Also declined to attend congregational dinners or other public events because of associated fees to attend.*

Forty-seven respondents reported the cost of Jewish education and Jewish camps as prohibitively expensive.

*Difficult for children to attend Jewish school and camps. Cannot afford classes for my children they previously enjoyed at the JCC. It is a struggle to pay my JCC membership. They only give partial scholarship.*

*Would like to send grandchildren to Jewish summer camp, but it is beyond our financial ability.*

The most striking differences in economic status reflect differences in age, parent status, and health. It is important to note that these characteristics are interrelated and reflect expected stage-of-life differences. Notably, Orthodox Jews in Baltimore are struggling financially more than other groups. Forty percent have insufficient savings for three months of expenses; 27% have received at least one public benefit in the past year; 11% have skipped a meal, not filled a prescription for a needed medication, or missed a rent or mortgage payment; and 10% have been constrained from participating in Jewish life for financial reasons.

Two percent of Jewish households do not have health insurance.



## HEALTH STATUS AND NEEDS

Understanding the health status of individuals in the community is important because poor health can be an indicator of needs for community-based services and may prevent individuals from participating in the community's programs.

Twenty-nine percent of Jewish households in Baltimore include at least one person who is limited by some sort of health issue, special need, or disability (Table 4.5). In 14% of households, or almost half of those with a need, the health issue causes a limitation in the ability to work for pay, attend school, or do housework. Two percent of households did not receive the services that were required to address the health need (not shown in table).

Thirty-seven percent of households with a health limitation—representing 5% of all households—required assistance with basic care. Housekeeping assistance was required by 4% of households, home maintenance by 3%, and help with personal care by 2%.

**Table 4.5. Health challenges for anyone in household**

	<b>Any health issue, special need, or disability (%)</b>	<b>Health issue, special need, or disability causes limitation (%)</b>
All Jewish households	29	14
<b>Engagement group</b>		
Familial	39	16
Personal	33	17
Involved	23	10
Communal	27	11
Immersed	31	17
<b>Geography</b>		
Baltimore City	27	14
Baltimore County	32	14
Carroll & Harford Counties	36	9
<b>Head of household age</b>		
23-34	14	5
35-49	21	9
50-64	33	17
65-79	35	16
80+	62	26
<b>Marital status</b>		
Inmarried	29	15
Intermarried	27	12
Not married	34	15
<b>Parent status</b>		
No children in household	33	15
Children in household	21	9
<b>Household denomination</b>		
Orthodox	32	16
Conservative	31	11
Reform	29	17
No denomination	29	12
<b>Standard of living</b>		
Prosperous	21	6
Living very comfortably	26	7
Living reasonably comfortably	25	13
Just getting along, nearly poor, poor	50	32

Respondents who indicated that a household member is limited by a health issue, special need, or disability were asked to categorize the issue. The most frequent limitation is chronic illness, occurring in 48% of households with a health issue, representing 14% of all Jewish households (Table 4.6).

Physical illnesses are faced by 10% of households. Five percent of households include someone with a mental health issue, 3% include someone with a learning disability, and 2% include someone with a developmental or cognitive disability. The 4% of households with some other health limitation were asked to describe them. Of the 81 who responded, the most commonly cited conditions were heart conditions and hearing impairments.

**Table 4.6. Type of health issue, special need, or disability**

	<b>Households with a health need (%)</b>	<b>All Jewish households (%)</b>
Chronic illness	48	14
Physical disability	37	10
Mental illness	17	5
Learning disability	9	3
Developmental or cognitive disability	7	2
Other	14	4

## CAREGIVERS

Thirteen percent of Jewish households are serving as primary caregivers for a relative, separate from routine childcare. Jews ages 50-64 are most likely to be providing care to someone else, as they are the generation “sandwiched” between younger children and older parents, and who themselves may be experiencing the first signs of ill health caused by aging.

Thirty-four percent of caregivers (representing 4% of all households) are providing care for someone living in their own household, 66% of caregivers (representing 9% of all households) are providing care for someone in another Baltimore-area household, and 14% of caregivers (representing 2% of all households) are providing care for someone outside of the Baltimore area. Ten percent of caregiving households are providing care to people in two or more of these locations. Nearly all caregivers, 87%, are helping a parent or parent-in-law, but some are providing care to a spouse (14%) or a child, whether a minor (5%) or age 18 and older (5%).

## OLDER ADULTS

Nine percent of Jewish adults have a parent living in a group home, assisted living facility, nursing home, or independent living community in Baltimore (including 3% whose parent resides in a Jewish-sponsored facility), and 12% have a parent living in such an arrangement elsewhere.

Four percent of Jewish adults ages 65 and older in Baltimore live in an assisted living facility, a nursing home, or an independent living community, half of whom are in a Jewish-sponsored facility. Among those who do not live in such a community, 4% are considering moving to one within the next five years.

Six percent of Jewish adults ages 70 and older live in an assisted living facility, nursing home, or independent living community in Baltimore, half of whom are in a Jewish-sponsored facility. Of those who do not live in such a community, 7% are considering moving to one within the next five years.

Some adults ages 65 and older experience challenges related to aging. Six percent are at least somewhat limited by the transportation needed to go about their daily lives. Isolation is a problem for the 16% of adults ages 65 and older who are dissatisfied with the amount of time they spend with friends and family. Notably, this feeling of isolation is felt more strongly by seniors living in the City of Baltimore than those living elsewhere in the area.

As illustrated by Table 4.5, above, 26% of households headed by a Jewish adult ages 80 or older include someone with a health issue, special need, or disability. As displayed in Table 4.7, below, 20% of households with Jewish adults ages 80 and older were unable to participate in Jewish life because of a health limitation.

## HEALTH LIMITATIONS AND JEWISH LIFE

Eight percent of households include someone who, in the past year, was constrained by health issues from participating in the Baltimore Jewish community (Table 4.7). Greater shares of Jews in the Immersed (16%) and Communal (11%) groups were limited in Jewish life by health restrictions, but this is a result of their greater interest in participation. If respondents who indicated they were not interested in participating in the community are excluded from the analysis, there are no significant differences between engagement groups. Fewer Jewish adults younger than age 65 had health limitations constraining their ability to participate in Jewish life than did Jewish adults ages 65 and older.

Respondents who indicated that health limitations affected their abilities to engage with Jewish life were invited to describe the constraints, and 247 gave answers. Participating in services, Jewish rituals, and events and activities was the most commonly cited limitation, with 162 responses. Accessibility concerns, such as clear access to buildings and programmatic spaces or transportation issues because of poor eyesight or injury, were mentioned by 116 respondents. Many respondents indicated that either chronic or short-term health issues made it difficult or impossible for them to attend religious services or other Jewish programs as frequently as they would like.

Table 4.7. Health limitations to Jewish life

	Unable to participate in Jewish life due to health or ability constraint (%)
All Jewish households	8
Engagement group	
Familial	4
Personal	5
Involved	3
Communal	11
Immersed	16
Geography	
Baltimore City	10
Baltimore County	8
Carroll & Harford Counties	2
Head of household age	
23-34	4
35-49	7
50-64	8
65-79	10
80+	20
Marital status	
Inmarried	11
Intermarried	2
Not married	11
Parent status	
No children in household	9
Children in household	7
Household denomination	
Orthodox	16
Conservative	10
Reform	9
No denomination	4
Standard of living	
Prosperous	2
Living very comfortably	4
Living reasonably comfortably	10
Just getting along, nearly poor, poor	14

Examples of respondents describing their difficulties engaging in Jewish life as a result of health conditions include:

*Anything held at night because I do not drive after dark. Volunteer activities.*

*Chronic migraines and chronic fatigue get in the way of things all across the board. I'm often too tired and/or too overwhelmed psychologically to do things.*

*Difficult to walk over 20 minutes to shul on Shabbos and Yom Tov.*

## ECONOMIC INSECURITY AND HEALTH LIMITATIONS

Health issues and economic challenges are deeply interconnected within the Baltimore Jewish community.

As seen in Table 4.5, half of households that report their standard of living is “just getting along,” “nearly poor,” or “poor” include a member with a health issue, special need, or disability, and in 32% of such households that health issue limits the ability to work or attend school. In “prosperous” households, on the other hand, the respective numbers are 21% and 6%. Additionally, as seen in Table 4.7, households that described their standard of living as “prosperous” or “living very comfortably” were less likely to indicate that health limitations constrained them from participating in Jewish life than households whose standard of living was less affluent.

Households with health limitations are more likely to be in deep economic need. They are more than five times as likely to receive public benefits (Table 4.4), and nearly five times as likely to be unable to pay off a \$400 expense in full. Twenty percent of them, as opposed to 5% of households without health limitations, have had to skip a meal, housing payment, or medication at some point.

These households are also more likely to lack deeper financial cushioning. Forty-three percent of households limited by health issues report not having three months of savings, about twice the rate of Jewish households without such limitations. In terms of saving for retirement, 65% of households without health issues feel confident in their ability to do so, compared to 41% of households with a health limitation.

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## CHAPTER 5

# JEWISH CHILDREN

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### CHAPTER HIGHLIGHTS

This chapter focuses on the choices parents make about how to raise their children and how they take advantage—or not—of Jewish educational opportunities available in Baltimore. The goal is to describe the landscape of educational programs, including Jewish preschools; formal Jewish education programs, both part-time and full-time; and informal Jewish education programs, including camp and youth groups.

- Among the 22,500 children who live in Baltimore Jewish households, 20,500 (91%) are being raised Jewish in some way, either by religion, secularly or culturally, or as Jewish and another religion.
- Among the 2,000 children not being raised Jewish, 1,600 are being raised with no religion, 200 are being raised in another religion, and 200 have not yet had a religion decided for them.
- Virtually all inmarried parents are raising their children Jewish, and among children of intermarried parents, 75% are being raised Jewish in some way.
- Of Jewish children who are not yet in kindergarten, 17% were enrolled in a Jewish preschool program.
- Half of Jewish children in grades K-12 were enrolled in some form of Jewish school during the 2018-19 academic year. This includes 39% in day school or yeshiva, and 12% in part-time school.
- Of Jewish children in grades K-12, 50% participated in at least one form of informal education.
- Among households with at least one child age 12 or younger, 44% receive books from PJ Library.

## JEWISH CHILDREN

Among the 22,500 children who live in Baltimore Jewish households, there are 20,500 children (91% of all children) who are being raised Jewish in some way, either by religion, secularly or culturally, or as Jewish and another religion (Table 5.1). Among the remaining children, 1,600 are being raised without religion, 200 are being raised in another religion, and 200 have not yet had a religion decided for them.

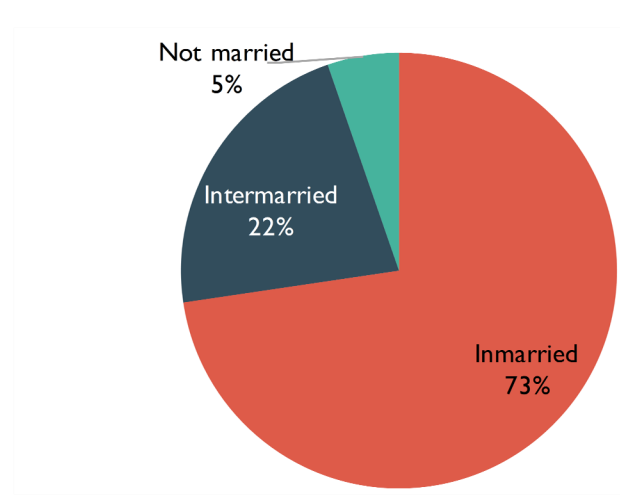
Of the 20,500 Jewish children, 73% are being raised by inmarried parents, 22% by intermarried parents, and the remainder, 5%, by single parents (Figure 5.1).

The age distribution of Jewish children skews young, with 41% being under age six (Table 5.2). About half (52%) of the children not being raised Jewish are teenagers.

**Table 5.1. Religion of children in Jewish households**

	<b>Number</b>	<b>All children (%)</b>
Jewish by religion	14,400	64%
Secular/culturally Jewish	4,500	20%
Jewish and another religion	1,600	7%
No religion	1,600	7%
Another religion	200	1%
Undecided	200	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>22,500</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Figure 5.1. Marital status of parents of Jewish children**



**Table 5.2. Ages of children in Jewish households**

	<b>All children</b>		<b>Jewish children</b>		<b>Non-Jewish children</b>	
	Number	Percentage (%)	Number	Percentage (%)	Number	Percentage (%)
0-5	9,100	40%	8,400	41%	600	30%
6-12	6,500	29%	6,100	30%	400	18%
13-17	7,000	31%	5,900	29%	1,100	52%
<b>Total</b>	<b>22,500</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>20,500</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>2,000</b>	<b>100%</b>



## RELIGION OF CHILDREN BY HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS

Overall, 91% of children in Jewish households are being raised Jewish in some way: by religion, as secular/cultural Jews, or as Jewish and another religion (Table 5.3). Nearly all parents who are part of the Communal and Immersed engagement groups are raising their children Jewish in some way. Notably, there is not a real difference by geography in how many parents are raising their children Jewish. Three quarters of parents who do not identify with a denomination are raising Jewish children. Virtually all inmarried parents are raising their children Jewish (Figure 5.2), and among children of intermarried parents, 75% are being raised Jewish in some way (Figure 5.3).

Table 5.3. Children raised Jewish by household characteristics

	Raised Jewish in some way (%)
All children in Jewish households	91
<b>Engagement group</b>	
Familial	--
Personal	81
Involved	89
Communal	97
Immersed	99
<b>Geography</b>	
Baltimore City	93
Baltimore County	89
Carroll & Harford Counties	90
<b>Marital status</b>	
Inmarried	99
Intermarried	75
Not married	76
<b>Household denomination</b>	
Orthodox	100
Conservative	95
Reform	95
No denomination	75

Figure 5.2. Religion raised, children of inmarriage

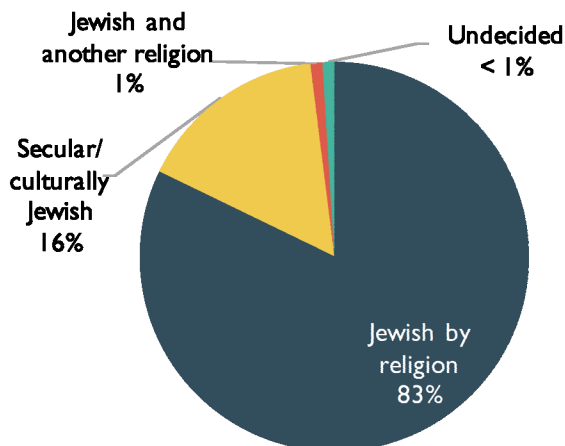
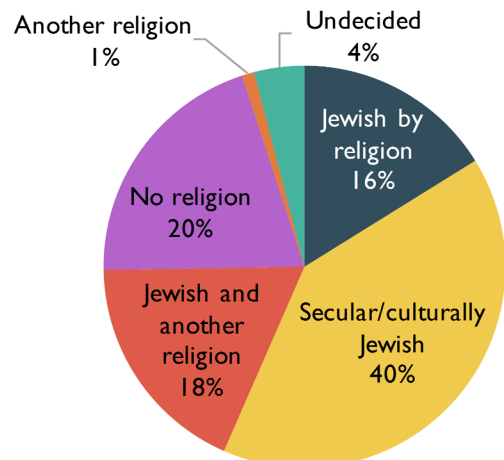


Figure 5.3. Religion raised, children of intermarriage



## PARTICIPATION IN JEWISH EDUCATION

Jewish education occurs in the context of Jewish preschools; formal classroom settings, such as day schools and part-time supplementary schools; and informal settings, including camps, youth groups, and peer trips to Israel. Table 5.4 shows the overall numbers of children in each form of Jewish schooling during the 2018-19 academic year, and Table 5.5 shows participation in informal Jewish education during the 2018-19 academic year. The tables also display the proportion of Jewish children who were enrolled, among the Jewish children who were age-eligible to attend that form of Jewish education.

Unlike the tables and figures earlier in the chapter, which focused only on children who are not yet 18, analysis of Jewish education includes 18- and 19-year-old children who are still in high school.

Because the vast majority of children in Jewish education are being raised Jewish in some way, the analysis below is restricted to children being raised Jewish in some way. In addition to the data presented in Tables 5.4 and 5.5, fewer than 100 children not being raised Jewish are participating in some form of Jewish education, either formal or informal.

Of Jewish children who are not yet in kindergarten, 17% were enrolled in a Jewish preschool program, and half of Jewish children in grades K-12 were enrolled in some form of Jewish school during the 2018-19 academic year. Thirty-nine percent of Jewish children in grades K-12 were enrolled in day schools or yeshivot. Another 12% of K-12 students were enrolled in a part-time school.

**Table 5.4. Children in formal Jewish education during 2018-19 school year**

	<b>Jewish student enrollment (number)</b>	<b>Proportion of age-eligible Jewish children (%)</b>
Jewish preschool	1,300	17%
Any Jewish schooling, K-12	6,900	50%
Part-time school, K-12	1,600	12%
Day school, K-12	5,300	39%

**Table 5.5. Children in informal education during 2018-19 school year**

	<b>Jewish student enrollment (number)</b>	<b>Proportion of age-eligible Jewish children (%)</b>
Any informal Jewish education, K-12	6,800	50%
Jewish day camp, K-12	4,300	32%
Jewish overnight camp, K-12	1,900	14%
Jewish tutoring/classes, K-12	1,000	7%
Jewish youth group, 6-12	1,200	15%

Of Jewish children in grades K-12, 50% participated in at least one form of informal education in during the 2018-19 school year (Table 5.5). Thirty-two percent of Jewish children in grades K-12 attended a Jewish day camp, as a camper or staff, in the summer of 2018, as did 14% of children at an overnight camp. Seven percent of Jewish children participated in some form of Jewish private tutoring and classes. These lessons included activities such as bar or bat mitzvah tutoring or Hebrew language lessons. Fifteen percent of Jewish children in grades 6-12 participated in a Jewish youth group.

Six percent of Jewish high school students (approximately 300) traveled to Israel on a peer trip at some point in the past (not shown in table).

Overall, 65% of Jewish children in grades K-12 participated in at least one formal or informal Jewish educational program during 2018-19.

Eight percent of Baltimore-area grandparents helped pay for their grandchildren's Jewish education, whether at local or non-local institutions.

Among households with at least one child ages 12 or younger, 44% received books from PJ Library (not shown in table). Another 6% were unaware of the program.

Of Jewish children who have reached bar or bat mitzvah age, 68% had a bar or bat mitzvah and another 6% expected to have a bar or bat mitzvah in the future.

## DRIVERS OF PARTICIPATION IN JEWISH EDUCATION

Because decisions to participate in Jewish education are typically made by parents, those outcomes are linked with the characteristics and Jewish engagement of adults. Tables 5.6 and 5.7 describe the households that participate in various forms of Jewish education. (See Tables 5.4 and 5.5, above, for child participation rates.) In these two tables, for each household characteristic listed, the table shows the proportion of Jewish households with Jewish age-eligible children that enrolled at least one child in that form of Jewish education during the 2018-19 academic year.

**Formal Jewish Education** includes preschool, part-time school, and day school. Rates of participation in Jewish schooling are higher among the Immersed group than any other engagement group, with 32% enrolling their children in Jewish preschool and 89% enrolling their children in some form of Jewish school (Table 5.6). Parents in Carroll and Harford counties send their children to a part-time school at higher rates than do those in Baltimore City or County, although the difference is largely attributable to more Baltimore City and County parents enrolling their children in day schools. Inmarried and intermarried parents send their children to part-time schools at similar rates, but very few intermarried parents enroll children in day schools.

Table 5.6. Participation in formal Jewish education by household characteristics, 2018-19

	<b>Jewish preschool (%)</b>	<b>Any Jewish schooling, K-12 (%)</b>	<b>Part-time school, K-12 (%)</b>	<b>Day school, K-12 (%)</b>
Jewish households with age-eligible children	18	43	14	30
<b>Engagement group</b>				
Familial	--	--	--	--
Personal	--	3	2	1
Involved	18	20	11	9
Communal	9	37	29	9
Immersed	32	89	11	78
<b>Geography</b>				
Baltimore City	30	59	15	45
Baltimore County	14	34	10	24
Carroll & Harford Counties	--	31	31	<1
<b>Marital status</b>				
Inmarried	24	61	15	47
Intermarried	7	14	12	2
Not married	--	16	8	10
<b>Household denomination</b>				
Orthodox	34	89	1	89
Conservative	12	47	35	14
Reform	14	26	25	1
No denomination	2	7	2	5

**Informal Jewish Education** includes tutoring, camps, youth groups, and Israel trips. For most forms of informal education, participation follows expected patterns of engagement, with participation highest among families in the Immersed group (Table 5.7). An exception is the Israel trip; it is possible that parents in the Immersed group prefer family trips to peer trips to Israel for their children. Fewer households in Carroll and Harford counties enroll their children in most types of informal education, with the exception of youth groups. Interestingly, more intermarried parents than others have their children participate in some form of Jewish tutoring or private classes.

Table 5.7. Participation in informal Jewish education by household characteristics

	Any informal education, K-12 (%)	Jewish tutoring, K-12 (%)	Jewish day camp, K-12 (%)	Jewish overnight camp, K-12 (%)	Youth group, 6-12 (%)	Israel trip, 9-12 (%)*
Jewish households with age-eligible children	49	8	30	17	19	7
<b>Engagement group</b>						
Familial	--	--	--	--	--	--
Personal	18	0	7	11	21	--
Involved	24	0	6	4	27	25
Communal	42	4	23	16	24	1
Immersed	76	14	61	23	34	11
<b>Geography</b>						
Baltimore City	46	5	34	16	19	3
Baltimore County	48	12	28	13	26	7
Carroll & Harford Counties	18	3	5	7	21	5
<b>Marital status</b>						
Inmarried	54	6	42	18	26	6
Intermarried	27	17	5	3	12	<1
Not married	52	6	24	18	32	12
<b>Household denomination</b>						
Orthodox	79	14	68	20	33	6
Conservative	36	4	23	19	17	8
Reform	44	2	15	19	33	3
No denomination	25	14	6	2	10	8

\* Except for trips to Israel, each type of Jewish education in this table is based on the 2018-19 academic year.

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## CHAPTER 6

# SYNAGOGUE AND RITUAL LIFE

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### CHAPTER HIGHLIGHTS

Synagogues have long been the central communal and religious “home” for US Jews, and membership in a congregation is one of the key ways Jews affiliate with the Jewish community. Synagogue membership notwithstanding, many Jews participate in rituals on a regular or intermittent basis at home. Religious and ritual observance constitute one means by which Jews in Baltimore express their Jewish identities.

- One third of households (approximately 15,000) include someone who belongs to a synagogue or another Jewish worship community of some type. Forty percent of Jewish adults live in synagogue-member households, similar to the rest of the country.
- Twenty-seven percent of households are dues-paying members of “brick-and-mortar” congregations, traditionally structured with buildings and ordained clergy.
- One-in-five synagogue-member households belong to multiple congregations or prayer groups (e.g., independent minyan, Chabad).
- Among households who are members of local brick-and-mortar synagogues, 53% are members of Orthodox congregations, 31% are members of Conservative congregations, 18% are members of Reform congregations, and 1% are members of synagogues of other denominations.
- Passover and Hanukkah are observed by the largest proportion of the Baltimore Jewish community, with 83% attending a seder and 82% lighting Hanukkah candles.
- High Holiday services were attended by 51% of Jewish adults.

## SYNAGOGUES AND CONGREGATIONS

In Baltimore, 33% of households (approximately 15,000) include someone who belongs to a synagogue or another Jewish worship community of some type (Table 6.1). Forty percent of Jewish adults live in synagogue-member households, similar to the rest of the country (39%). Thirty-one percent of households indicate that they belong to at least one congregation in Baltimore, meaning 2% belong to prayer communities in other places (not shown in table). Twenty-seven percent of households are dues-paying members of “brick-and-mortar” congregations, which typically have conventional membership dues structures, their own buildings, ordained clergy, educational programming for children, and associated amenities and programs, and draw from a relatively narrow range of the denominational spectrum (see box below).

Synagogue membership is highest among those in the Immersed group (98%), followed by 41% of those in the Communal group. Very few in the Familial or Personal groups have joined a congregation. Geographically, rates of overall congregational membership are similar in the City of Baltimore and Baltimore County, and lower in Carroll and Harford counties. Households with adults ages 80 or older have higher membership rates than all other age groups. Inmarried households and households with children belong to congregations at higher rates than their counterparts.

Synagogue affiliation models are no longer limited to “brick-and-mortar” synagogues with a paid dues structure. Organizations such as Chabad, independent *minyanim* and *havurot*, and High Holiday congregations have grown in popularity, and voluntary contributions have replaced dues in some congregations.

### CONGREGATION TYPES

**“Brick-and-mortar” synagogue:** Typically has its own building, a conventional dues/membership structure, professional clergy, and programs or amenities commonly available in synagogues (e.g., Hebrew school). Usually appeals to a relatively narrow range of the denominational spectrum.

**Independent *minyan* or *havurah*:** May lack its own building, conventional dues/membership structure, professional clergy, and/or amenities commonly available in synagogues.

**High Holiday congregation:** Meets only on the High Holidays.

**Chabad:** Typically has its own building, professional clergy, and programs or amenities commonly available in synagogues. Usually does not have a conventional dues/membership structure. Draws from across the denominational spectrum.



Table 6.1. Synagogue membership

	Any synagogue member (%)	Local synagogue member (%)	Local brick-and-mortar synagogue, pays dues (%)
All Jewish households	33	31	27
Engagement groups			
Familial	<1	<1	0
Personal	2	2	<1
Involved	17	13	12
Communal	41	37	34
Immersed	98	95	89
Geography			
Baltimore City	36	34	30
Baltimore County	32	30	27
Carroll & Harford Counties	18	16	14
Head of household age			
23-34	37	33	26
35-49	33	33	28
50-64	24	23	21
65-79	36	33	31
80+	53	50	47
Marital status			
Inmarried	57	56	50
Intermarried	11	10	9
Not married	25	22	18
Parent status			
No children in household	29	27	24
Children in household	42	42	35
Household denomination			
Orthodox	86	85	76
Conservative	53	49	47
Reform	26	24	22
No denomination	3	3	2

Among synagogue member households, 9% say they belong to a local brick-and-mortar synagogue where they do not pay dues (Table 6.2). This represents 3% of all households. Alternative congregational structures affiliated with Baltimore households include Chabad (2% of member households) and a *minyan* or *havurah* (1% of member households). Twenty percent of local member households belong to multiple synagogues or worship groups (not shown in table), many of them more than one type of congregation.

Table 6.2. Household membership of congregations of different types

	Brick-and-mortar synagogue, no dues (%)	Out-of-area synagogue member (%)	Chabad (%)	Independent minyan (%)
Synagogue-member households	9	7	2	1
Engagement groups				
Familial	--	--	--	--
Personal	--	--	--	--
Involved	8	23	0	<1
Communal	7	9	<1	<1
Immersed	11	3	2	4
Geography				
Baltimore City	8	8	1	5
Baltimore County	10	5	2	1
Carroll & Harford Counties	5	19	2	<1
Head of household age				
23-34	12	12	<1	4
35-49	18	<1	<1	<1
50-64	7	3	1	7
65-79	5	8	2	1
80+	3	6	7	1
Marital status				
Inmarried	10	3	1	3
Intermarried	4	8	3	<1
Not married	8	16	1	1
Parent status				
No children in household	6	9	2	1
Children in household	15	2	<1	4
Household denomination				
Orthodox	15	2	3	5
Conservative	3	7	<1	<1
Reform	4	10	<1	<1
No denomination	25	18	<1	1

Seven percent of member households, corresponding to 2% of all households, indicate that they belong to a congregation outside of Baltimore. In most cases, these congregations are just outside of the Baltimore catchment area (e.g., in Howard County). Among younger Jewish adults, these may be the congregations where they grew up and where their parents are still active members. And some of the non-local congregations are in “snowbird” communities or in Israel.

Among households affiliated with local brick-and-mortar synagogues, 53% are members of Orthodox congregations, 31% are members of Conservative congregations, 18% are members of Reform congregations, and 1% are members of synagogues of other denominations (for example, Renewal or Reconstructionist) or no denomination (Table 6.3).

**Table 6.3. Denomination of brick-and-mortar synagogues**

	<b>Brick-and-mortar synagogue households (%)</b>
Orthodox	53
Conservative	31
Reform	18
Other, no denomination	1

## SYNAGOGUE PARTICIPATION

Sixty-five percent of Jewish adults attended services at least once in the past year, and 28% attended a service monthly or more (Table 6.4). Fifty-one percent of Jewish adults attended High Holiday services. Nearly all synagogue members attended services, but 43% of non-members still attended at least once over the last year.

Table 6.4. Jewish religious services

	Attended services in past year (%)	Attended services monthly (%)	Attended services High Holidays (%)
All Jewish adults	65	28	51
Engagement group			
Familial	5	0	0
Personal	16	0	0
Involved	72	13	39
Communal	99	11	80
Immersed	100	92	99
Geography			
Baltimore City	71	38	56
Baltimore County	62	25	50
Carroll & Harford Counties	52	8	39
Age			
23-34	78	42	63
35-49	62	23	48
50-64	55	24	46
65-79	62	24	50
80+	74	32	62
Marital status			
Inmarried	77	41	67
Intermarried	42	6	21
Not married	59	20	47
Parent status			
No children in household	60	23	47
Children in household	75	41	64
Denomination			
Orthodox	97	84	95
Conservative	90	32	80
Reform	70	16	50
No denomination	33	4	17
Synagogue member			
Not member	43	3	23
Member	98	66	95

## RITUAL PRACTICES

The majority of Baltimore Jewish adults mark Jewish holidays over the course of the year, with 83% attending a Passover seder and 82% lighting Hanukkah candles (Table 6.5). Passover and Hanukkah celebrations are nearly universal among the Immersed, Communal, and Involved engagement groups but less frequent among members of the Familial group. In contrast, Shabbat candle lighting and Shabbat meal attendance are widespread among those in the Immersed group but less frequent for all other groups. Over half of Jewish adults fasted on Yom Kippur (58%), including 93% of the Immersed group and majorities of the Involved and Communal groups. Eight-two percent of the Immersed group keep kosher at home, but few members of the Familial, Personal, Involved, and Communal groups observe this practice.

Table 6.5. Ritual practice

	Attend Passover seder in typical year (%)	Light Hanukkah candles in typical year (%)	Ever light Shabbat candles in past year (%)	Ever have Shabbat meal in past year (%)	Fasted on Yom Kippur* (%)	Keep kosher at home (%)
All Jewish adults	83	82	45	54	58	25
Engagement group						
Familial	40	44	<1	9	18	2
Personal	64	66	13	22	16	3
Involved	96	93	31	43	60	7
Communal	96	97	58	71	79	9
Immersed	100	100	96	98	93	82
Geography						
Baltimore City	85	88	55	65	62	37
Baltimore County	80	80	44	51	58	20
Carroll & Harford Counties	77	78	26	31	42	2
Age						
23-34	90	90	61	73	67	43
35-49	89	86	46	56	60	22
50-64	75	80	40	48	55	21
65-79	72	74	41	46	52	17
80+	84	68	49	53	53	19
Marital status						
Inmarried	92	93	63	68	70	37
Intermarried	63	70	14	25	36	3
Not married	76	69	40	54	54	18
Parent status						
No children in home	77	76	40	50	53	18
Children in home	91	97	62	66	70	41
Denomination						
Orthodox	98	98	94	95	94	90
Conservative	95	97	60	71	80	21
Reform	84	87	43	54	58	2
No denomination	65	66	16	27	30	6
Synagogue member						
Not member	70	72	23	34	39	5
Member	98	99	83	86	88	56

\* In addition, 6% of Jewish adults could not fast for medical reasons.

## CHAPTER 7

# SOCIAL AND COMMUNAL LIFE

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### CHAPTER HIGHLIGHTS

The Baltimore Jewish community offers diverse avenues for communal participation. Jews join local, regional, and national membership organizations and attend an array of cultural, educational, and religious events. They volunteer and donate their time to Jewish and non-Jewish causes. Through their participation, they make Jewish friends and strengthen their ties to the local community.

Jewish life also includes informal or personal involvement with Jewish friends and community members. The vast majority of Jews in Baltimore have at least some close Jewish friends, and more than six in ten say at least half of their closest friends are Jewish. Consequently, there are many opportunities for Baltimore Jewish community members to participate in Jewish cultural activities and discuss Jewish topics with friends or on their own.

This chapter describes the multiple ways in which Jews in Baltimore interact and participate with their local peers and institutions and points to measures that can enhance these connections. Some of the main findings include:

- Two thirds of Baltimore Jewish adults read material from at least one local Jewish organization in the past year, and one third read this type of material at least once a month.
- Forty percent of Jewish adults attended at least one Jewish-sponsored program, activity, or class in Baltimore in the past year, and 13% did so at least once per month.
- A majority of Baltimore's Jews, 59%, attended a program, activity, or service at a local synagogue or congregation in the past year. Thirty-eight percent engaged in an activity at the JCC of Greater Baltimore, and 15% attended a local Chabad program or service.
- Seventeen percent of Jewish adults volunteered for a local Jewish organization.
- More than half of Jewish households (56%) gave to at least one Jewish organization, representing 69% of households who made any sort of charitable donation. Forty-one percent of Jewish households gave to organizations that primarily serve the Jewish community of Baltimore.

- Almost one quarter (23%) of households donated to a Jewish congregation.
- There are a number of reasons why people may not feel connected to Jewish community. Not being able to find interesting Jewish activities has been a concern for 44% of Jewish adults in Baltimore. A similar proportion, 42%, do not feel they know enough people at Jewish organizations and programs. For 38% of Jews, the reason for the lack of connection is not feeling comfortable in their level of Jewish knowledge.
- The vast majority (95%) of Jews in Baltimore have at least some close Jewish friends, and 42% report that most or all of their closest friends are Jewish.
- Members of the Baltimore Jewish community are concerned about antisemitism, but that worry is more directed at the national (59%) than the local level (26%).

## JEWS ORGANIZATIONS AND PROGRAMS

Baltimore Jews participate in a wide range of Jewish organizations and activities. Ten percent of Jewish households say they belong to a local Jewish organization other than a synagogue or the JCC (Table 7.1). In addition to formal membership organizations, 9% of Jewish households say they belong to an informal or grassroots group in Baltimore, such as a Jewish book club.

Two thirds of Baltimore Jewish adults read material from at least one local Jewish organization in the past year (including synagogues or the JCC), and 33% read this type of material at least once a month (Table 7.2). Forty percent of Jewish adults attended at least one Jewish-sponsored program, activity, or class in Baltimore in the past year, and 13% attended a Jewish-sponsored event at least once per month. Program attendance is higher among Jews living in the City of Baltimore and Baltimore County. Notably, Jews ages 80 and older read organization materials at very high rates, but far fewer of them attend programs (see Chapter 4 for more data on how health limitations affect participation in Jewish life).

While nearly all in the Immersed group read a Jewish organization's material (95%) and almost three quarters attended a Jewish organization's program (72%), also notable are the 71% in the Personal group who read material from a Jewish organization. This group's high rate of engagement in activities that can be done alone is its defining characteristic.

A majority of Baltimore's Jews, 59%, attended a program, activity, or service at a local synagogue or congregation in the past year (Table 7.3). Thirty-eight percent participated in an activity at the JCC of Greater Baltimore, and 15% attended a local Chabad program or service. Perhaps because they tend to live farther from Jewish institutions, fewer Jews in Carroll and Harford Counties attended programs at these locations.

Fifteen percent of adults younger than age 35 participated with one of the local young-adult organizations: BAYiT, B'nai Israel Young Adults, CHAI Life at Baltimore Hebrew Congregation, Charm City Tribe, Impact, Moishe House, and Repair the World.



Table 7.1. Household memberships

	<b>Belong to Jewish organization other than a synagogue or JCC (%)</b>	<b>Belong to informal Jewish group (%)</b>
All Jewish households	10	9
<b>Engagement Group</b>		
Familial	1	<1
Personal	5	2
Involved	1	4
Communal	14	9
Immersed	28	26
<b>Geography</b>		
Baltimore City	8	10
Baltimore County	12	9
Carroll & Harford Counties	6	1
<b>Head of household age</b>		
23-34	4	15
35-49	6	9
50-64	9	5
65-79	14	9
80+	24	18
<b>Marital status</b>		
Inmarried	17	13
Intermarried	3	4
Not married	9	9
<b>Parent status</b>		
No children in household	11	8
Children in household	7	11
<b>Household denomination</b>		
Orthodox	21	22
Conservative	20	13
Reform	7	5
No denomination	4	2

Table 7.2. Involvement in Baltimore Jewish organizations, past year

	Read Jewish organizational material (%)		Attended program, event, or class (%)	
	Ever (%)	Monthly (%)	Ever (%)	Monthly (%)
All Jewish adults	66	33	40	13
Engagement group				
Familial	16	2	2	< 1
Personal	71	25	18	3
Involved	18	5	36	3
Communal	82	38	52	14
Immersed	95	67	72	32
Geography				
Baltimore City	70	36	45	17
Baltimore County	65	34	39	12
Carroll & Harford Counties	45	17	21	1
Age				
23-34	69	31	53	21
35-49	62	30	38	10
50-64	67	38	32	9
65-79	60	32	39	16
80+	74	39	37	9
Marital status				
Inmarried	76	43	50	18
Intermarried	46	14	19	3
Not married	61	32	39	13
Parent status				
No children in household	62	32	35	12
Children in household	74	37	51	15
Denomination				
Orthodox	90	67	66	31
Conservative	76	44	51	15
Reform	63	22	48	13
No denomination	49	16	18	3

Table 7.3. Location of programs, activities, or services

	<b>A local synagogue or congregation (%)</b>	<b>JCC of Greater Baltimore (%)</b>	<b>A local Chabad (%)</b>
All Jewish adults	59	38	15
<b>Engagement group</b>			
Familial	6	10	3
Personal	17	24	3
Involved	58	29	5
Communal	87	42	16
Immersed	99	60	35
<b>Geography</b>			
Baltimore City	64	37	17
Baltimore County	60	38	14
Carroll & Harford Counties	31	12	13
<b>Age</b>			
23-34	69	34	17
35-49	57	49	13
50-64	53	32	16
65-79	57	33	12
80+	75	40	15
<b>Marital status</b>			
Inmarried	75	47	19
Intermarried	32	19	5
Not married	53	30	16
<b>Parent status</b>			
No children in household	56	32	13
Children in household	69	46	20
<b>Denomination</b>			
Orthodox	98	60	37
Conservative	80	44	15
Reform	67	32	10
No denomination	28	23	6

## PERCEPTIONS OF JEWISH ORGANIZATIONS

Respondents were asked about their perceptions of how welcoming, caring, and supportive local Jewish organizations are toward people like themselves. Eighteen percent of respondents did not know or had no opinion. Table 7.4 displays the responses from among the 82% remaining and reports the proportions who “somewhat” or “very much” agreed with the statements that organizations are welcoming, caring, and/or supportive.

Across the board, members of the Familial group felt that local Jewish organizations were less welcoming, caring, and supportive. Interestingly, organizations were rated most highly by Jewish young adults ages 23-34 and Jews ages 80 and older.

**Table 7.4. Perceptions of Jewish organizations**

	Welcoming to people like you (%)		Care about people like you (%)		Supportive of people like you (%)	
	Somewhat	Very much	Somewhat	Very much	Somewhat	Very much
All Jewish adults	30	44	34	39	32	39
<b>Engagement group</b>						
Familial	17	13	14	9	15	7
Personal	38	20	46	13	39	18
Involved	37	35	44	22	32	34
Communal	34	46	37	39	39	39
Immersed	26	69	27	66	26	66
<b>Geography</b>						
Baltimore City	31	50	34	44	33	46
Baltimore County	30	39	33	34	31	36
Carroll & Harford Counties	35	31	36	22	37	21
<b>Age</b>						
23-34	29	53	32	46	28	52
35-49	38	38	39	33	37	35
50-64	30	35	28	33	31	31
65-79	28	45	36	35	29	40
80+	19	53	29	50	31	46
<b>Marital status</b>						
Inmarried	30	52	35	45	33	48
Intermarried	34	20	35	18	36	16
Not married	28	40	28	35	25	36
<b>Parent status</b>						
No children in household	31	40	35	33	33	35
Children in household	30	49	30	47	30	48
<b>Denomination</b>						
Orthodox	25	69	21	70	22	70
Conservative	26	51	31	44	34	40
Reform	36	44	40	34	29	44
No denomination	33	22	40	14	36	17

## VOLUNTEERING AND PHILANTHROPY

In the Baltimore Jewish community, 34% of Jewish adults say they engaged in some volunteer activity in the past month (Table 7.5). Of Jewish adults, 23% volunteered for a local non-Jewish organization in the past month, and 17% volunteered for a local Jewish organization. For Jewish organizations, 12% volunteered in a leadership role, and 11% volunteered in another type of role. Jewish adults outside of the Immersed group volunteer at similar rates, overall and for non-Jewish organizations, but while fewer members of the Immersed group volunteer for non-Jewish organizations (18%), many more volunteer for Jewish ones (44%).

Within the Baltimore Jewish community, 81% of households report making a charitable contribution in the past year (Table 7.6). More than half (56%) gave to at least one Jewish organization, representing 69% of donor households. Forty-one percent of Jewish households gave to organizations that primarily serve the Jewish community of Baltimore.

Jewish households in Carroll and Harford Counties make donations at similar rates to others, but fewer of them make donations to general Jewish organizations (49%) or those focused on the Baltimore Jewish community (20%).

The types of local Jewish organizations that received donations from respondents varied (Table 7.7). Fifty-six percent of those who donated to a Jewish organization gave to a Jewish congregation, representing 23% of all Jewish households. The Associated received donations from 21% of Jewish-organization donors, or 9% of all households.

Overall, 53% of Jewish households say they received donation requests from Baltimore Jewish organizations. Notably, 74% of the households that received requests made donations to Baltimore Jewish organizations, compared with 30% of the households that did not receive requests. Two percent of households have designated a local Jewish charity as a beneficiary in their wills or estate plans, but 24% of households do not have wills written.

Table 7.5. Volunteering in Baltimore

	Type of organization			Role at Jewish organization	
	Any volunteering (%)	Non-Jewish (%)	Jewish (%)	Leadership (%)	Other (%)
All Jewish adults	34	23	17	12	11
Engagement group					
Familial	30	30	0	0	0
Personal	28	27	4	3	2
Involved	33	27	7	4	5
Communal	35	28	14	11	9
Immersed	49	18	44	31	29
Geography					
Baltimore City	44	28	24	18	15
Baltimore County	33	25	14	9	9
Carroll & Harford Counties	22	15	9	7	7
Age					
23-34	39	22	26	21	14
35-49	39	29	15	10	11
50-64	36	27	13	9	9
65-79	32	25	15	10	9
80+	30	22	16	11	8
Marital status					
Inmarried	37	23	23	18	14
Intermarried	37	35	5	3	3
Not married	33	22	16	8	13
Parent status					
No children in household	36	27	16	11	10
Children in household	36	22	19	14	14
Denomination					
Orthodox	38	13	35	23	27
Conservative	40	31	18	13	11
Reform	40	29	19	14	13
No denomination	31	28	6	5	2

Table 7.6. Philanthropy

	Any donations (%)	Any donations to Jewish organizations (%)	Any donations to local Jewish organizations (%)
All Jewish households	81	56	41
Engagement Group			
Familial	62	9	3
Personal	73	31	12
Involved	81	45	20
Communal	87	81	56
Immersed	100	100	93
Geography			
Baltimore City	82	54	40
Baltimore County	81	58	40
Carroll & Harford Counties	83	49	20
Head of household age			
23-34	80	48	30
35-49	81	50	40
50-64	78	50	33
65-79	86	65	45
80+	89	86	69
Marital status			
Inmarried	89	77	65
Intermarried	82	40	17
Not married	73	47	31
Parent status			
No children in household	80	55	36
Children in household	86	60	49
Household denomination			
Orthodox	95	94	85
Conservative	90	77	55
Reform	77	49	33
No denomination	74	34	16

Table 7.7. Donors to types of local Jewish organizations

	Of households that donated to a local Jewish organization (%)	All Jewish households (%)
Jewish congregation	56	23
Jewish school or camp	38	16
Jewish-sponsored human service agency	34	14
The Associated	21	9
Jewish social justice organization	14	6
Another Jewish organization	15	6

## BARRIERS TO COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Jewish adults offer a number of reasons for their lack of connection to the Jewish community. For 44% of Jewish adults in Baltimore, the main impediment to a feeling of connection is not finding activities that interest them (Table 7.8). A similar proportion, 42%, do not feel they know enough people at Jewish organizations and programs. For 38% of Jews, the obstacle to participation is not feeling comfortable in their level of Jewish knowledge. For a little more than one quarter of the population, barriers include not feeling welcome (27%) or their political views (26%). In light of the last year's antisemitic violence, it is noteworthy that for 19% of adults, safety or security concerns inhibit their involvement in the Jewish community. For each of these barriers except political views, Jewish adults who feel "a little" connected to the Baltimore Jewish community perceive greater barriers to participation than those who feel "not at all," "somewhat," or "very much" connected to the local Jewish community.

Those who felt prevented in some way from participating in Jewish life were invited to share more details about what they felt, and why. Nearly 700 provided answers, which were categorized and are presented in Table 7.9.

Some respondents felt unwelcomed in Jewish spaces, or feared they would be, because of who they are—in some cases, this belief was a result of direct experience and in others, it was an assumption. This view was expressed in particular by those in interfaith families, Jews of color, and non-Orthodox Jews.

*The community of Park Heights is totally insular, with no room for Jews who are not Orthodox.*

*I am Black, and I hate being asked questions about whether I am in the right place.*

*I am concerned that the sensitivities to traditionally observant needs sometimes justify the insensitivities to liberally observant values that are of equal need, despite not being rooted in Halacha (Jewish law).*



Table 7.8. Any barrier to Jewish community connections

	Haven't found interesting activities (%)	Don't know many people (%)	Level of Jewish knowledge (%)	Not welcome (%)	Political views (%)	Safety or security concerns (%)
All Jewish adults	44	42	38	27	26	19
Engagement group						
Familial	35	42	45	40	26	17
Personal	58	60	50	37	41	19
Involved	45	41	49	44	13	26
Communal	52	46	37	29	30	21
Immersed	26	29	16	14	20	15
Geography						
Baltimore City	41	51	33	29	26	12
Baltimore County	44	36	37	31	29	23
Carroll & Harford Counties	42	61	50	27	18	24
Age						
23-34	47	60	36	27	19	11
35-49	45	46	39	38	19	23
50-64	42	33	38	38	36	20
65-79	38	36	33	20	32	21
80+	38	31	41	15	28	28
Marital status						
Inmarried	40	39	32	25	27	22
Intermarried	41	47	44	38	24	9
Not married	49	49	41	34	31	23
Parent status						
No children in household	44	42	39	30	31	19
Children in household	40	44	31	30	19	19
Denomination						
Orthodox	22	28	15	15	18	18
Conservative	45	36	32	26	29	20
Reform	47	46	48	36	21	18
No denomination	50	52	47	38	32	20
Strength of connection to Baltimore Jewish community						
Not at all	38	46	35	39	27	11
A little	68	64	54	48	31	28
Somewhat	48	47	42	29	33	24
Very much	22	20	20	10	20	15

*My wife is not Jewish, so my children are not Jewish according to Halacha, even though I am teaching them about Jewish culture. I feel like my family and I may not be accepted by the Jewish community.*

*As the non-Jewish spouse in a Jewish family, I am worried I won't be accepted and have felt that way in some Jewish events in the course of my relationship with my husband.*

Politics, both domestic and in relation to Israel, can present challenges for conservatives who inhabit predominantly liberal spaces, and liberals who inhabit predominantly conservative ones.

*Being a Democrat in the Orthodox community makes one feel like a pariah.*

*Both my wife and I are politically conservative and usually vote Republican. I frequently feel out of place in a Jewish congregation.*

*The Jewish community seems to be too far to the right with respect to Israel.*

*I am quite conservative politically. This tends to self-limit my association with many Jews, because even though many Orthodox Jews share my political beliefs, I don't have the religious aspect in my life.*

Respondents who live outside the areas of highest Jewish concentration wrote about the challenges of going to programs and events farther from where they live.

*Much of Jewish life seems to be centered in the Park Heights/Pikesville area.*

*Biggest limit for me is distance from the majority of the Jewish community in the Baltimore area. The closest synagogue is 30 minutes away, and I live almost an hour from the heart of the Jewish community in Baltimore.*

*Although my home in Carroll County is only about a 30 minute-drive to most activities, that ends up being enough of a hindrance, even though it is usually due to the normal stress and distractions from work and household chores. That ends up in a cycle which continues to limit my connection and [doesn't] give me motivation to make the effort.*

*Downtown Baltimore has no synagogues for me to become involved with, which is too bad, because I suspect there are other Jews like myself, who would like to be more involved, but not have to drive 30-40 minutes to get to a service. All the synagogues are in the county, and you cannot just stop by for services, you must be a member.*

Many respondents have experienced social challenges, either because they do not “fit” a prescribed lifestyle or because they do not have deep personal ties to the community.

*It's difficult and sometimes awkward to be more involved with the broader Jewish community that*

*centers around couples and sometimes extended families, when you are single. Baltimore can be very insular, making it difficult to develop a group of friends.*

*Baltimore is a hard community to break into. So many have been living here all their lives going back a few generations, that it is very clique based. This is especially true when both adults are from elsewhere. It took several years of active participation with preschool parent groups to make solid friendships.*

Perceived barriers to community participation are linked to feelings of connection to the Baltimore Jewish community. As noted in Figure 3.8, 76% of Jewish adults feel at least a little like part of the Jewish community in Baltimore, including 30% who feel they are “very much” part of the community. Although at least one limitation described in Table 7.8 is felt by 76% of Jewish adults, about half of those who feel “very much” part of the Jewish community feel a limitation (Table 7.10). Twenty-six percent of all Jewish adults report they feel one of the limitations “very much.” The more connected Jewish adults feel to the Baltimore Jewish community, the fewer barriers to participation they tend to perceive, but even among those who feel very connected to the community, about half (53%) perceive at least one barrier.

**Table 7.9. Frequency of participation in informal and cultural activities, past year**

Type of limitation/barrier	Number of responses
Feeling unwelcomed	203
Political views	136
Time constraints	73
Distance or location of institutions/programs	70
Don't feel welcome for identity: interfaith, denomination, or racial/ethnic minority	57
Haven't found a good fit	50
Views about Israel	47
Don't feel knowledgeable enough	43
Don't feel socially comfortable	37
Safety, security, and antisemitism fears	32
Something else	106

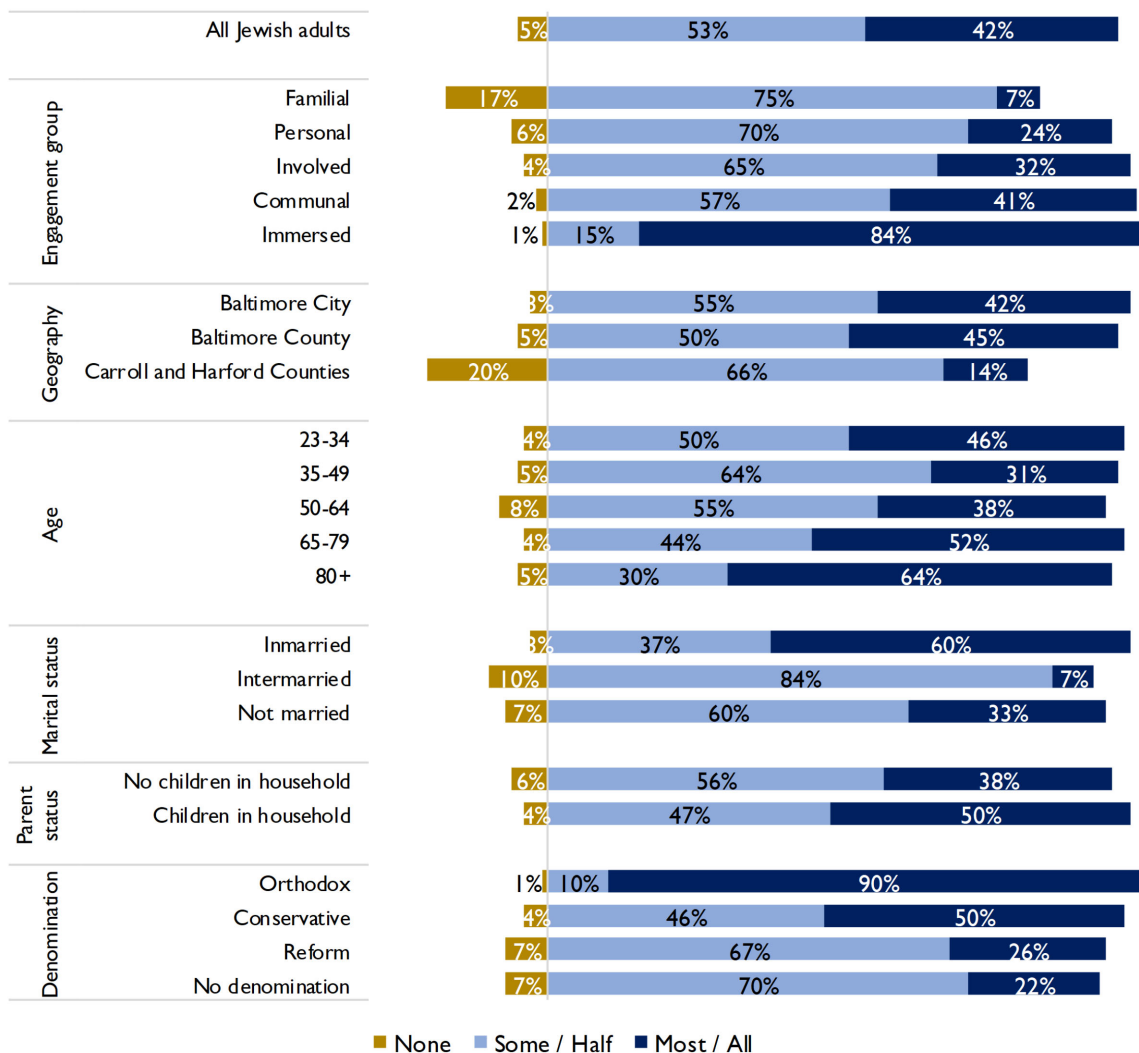
**Table 7.10. Connection to Baltimore Jewish community and barriers to involvement**

	Feeling any barrier to community involvement (%)	Feeling any barrier to community involvement “very much” (%)
All Jewish adults	76	26
Strength of connection to Baltimore Jewish community		
Not at all	80	46
A little	88	35
Somewhat	81	19
Very much	53	13

## INFORMAL INVOLVEMENT IN THE JEWISH COMMUNITY

Community engagement is closely tied to personal connections and friendships among Jews. The vast majority (95%) of Jews in Baltimore have at least some close Jewish friends, and 42% report that most or all of their closest friends are Jewish (Figure 7.1). Eighty-four percent of the Immersed group say that most or all of their close friends are Jewish, reflecting their deep engagement in the Jewish community, but even 83% of the Familial group have some close Jewish friends.

Figure 7.1. Jewish friends



Question: "How many of the people you consider to be your closest friends are Jewish?"

## INFORMAL AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

Informal and cultural activities include Jewish activities that are not necessarily sponsored by Jewish organizations, such as discussing Jewish topics, streaming Jewish content online, or reading Jewish books (Tables 7.11a, 7.11b).

Of all Jewish adults, 92% discussed Jewish topics in the past year, while 38% discussed these topics frequently. About three quarters of the Jewish community engaged in a Jewish cultural activity, such as attending Jewish theatre productions or reading Jewish books (77%), and read Jewish content online, such as websites, newsletters, and social media posts (74%).

Table 7.11a. Frequency of participation in informal and cultural activities in the past year

	Talk about Jewish topics		Engage in Jewish culture		Read online Jewish content	
Activities results	Ever (%)	Frequently (%)	Ever (%)	Frequently (%)	Ever (%)	Frequently (%)
All Jewish adults	92	38	77	25	74	27
Engagement group						
Familial	67	4	25	1	27	<1
Personal	99	30	91	13	97	21
Involved	81	7	54	6	7	0
Communal	99	39	90	17	91	23
Immersed	100	82	97	58	97	60
Geography						
Baltimore City	96	51	82	33	81	35
Baltimore County	89	35	74	18	71	23
Carroll & Harford Counties	90	11	77	9	65	10
Age						
23-34	95	52	81	30	81	26
35-49	93	33	75	20	71	21
50-64	93	39	74	20	75	28
65-79	85	31	78	20	68	27
80+	95	38	90	34	73	29
Marital status						
Inmarried	95	50	85	31	79	35
Intermarried	86	16	62	9	66	9
Not married	89	39	75	19	71	23
Parent status						
No children in household	91	36	76	20	72	23
Children in household	94	48	80	30	80	34
Denomination						
Orthodox	98	79	95	61	96	62
Conservative	93	44	80	20	79	25
Reform	92	22	75	12	67	12
No denomination	88	24	68	10	63	14

Nearly three quarters of Jewish adults (72%) read a Jewish publication, such as a magazine or newsletter in the past year, and 37% watched or listened to Jewish content online, such as a podcast or by “streaming” religious services.

Table 7.11b. Frequency of participation in informal and cultural activities in the past year

Activities results	Read Jewish publications		Watch/listen to online Jewish content	
	Ever (%)	Frequently (%)	Ever (%)	Frequently (%)
All Jewish adults	72	24	37	12
<b>Engagement group</b>				
Familial	12	<1	<1	<1
Personal	89	12	26	1
Involved	18	2	1	0
Communal	94	21	43	8
Immersed	100	59	79	37
<b>Geography</b>				
Baltimore City	82	29	45	21
Baltimore County	69	22	34	8
Carroll & Harford Counties	48	7	23	1
<b>Age</b>				
23-34	76	20	48	21
35-49	67	17	33	8
50-64	72	28	36	11
65-79	72	24	29	6
80+	85	43	50	7
<b>Marital status</b>				
Inmarried	84	32	46	17
Intermarried	49	5	17	2
Not married	70	23	38	11
<b>Parent status</b>				
No children in household	70	22	32	8
Children in household	79	27	49	21
<b>Denomination</b>				
Orthodox	97	62	83	43
Conservative	84	27	43	8
Reform	66	9	23	2
No denomination	58	9	18	2

## ANTISEMITISM

Members of the Baltimore Jewish community are concerned about antisemitism, but that worry is more directed at the national (59%) than the local level (26%; Table 7.12). Older Jews are more concerned about antisemitism than are younger Jews, as are Jews in Baltimore, Carroll, and Harford counties over Jews in the City of Baltimore—despite experiencing antisemitism at similar rates.

Sixteen percent of Jewish adults say they personally experienced antisemitism in the past year. Notably, Jewish adults ages 80 and older are most concerned about antisemitism but least likely to have personally experienced antisemitism in the past year.

Table 7.12. Antisemitism

Concerned about antisemitism, very much			
	In the United States (%)	In the Baltimore area (%)	Personal experience (%)
All Jewish adults	59	26	16
Engagement group			
Familial	57	28	10
Personal	60	26	22
Involved	43	17	10
Communal	63	29	15
Immersed	62	26	18
Geography			
Baltimore City	55	18	17
Baltimore County	61	30	15
Carroll & Harford Counties	64	35	19
Age			
23-34	46	6	16
35-49	49	23	18
50-64	66	34	19
65-79	71	37	11
80+	71	42	3
Marital status			
Inmarried	58	25	14
Intermarried	57	27	17
Not married	64	29	20
Parent status			
No children in household	63	28	16
Children in household	51	21	15
Denomination			
Orthodox	64	30	19
Conservative	66	33	18
Reform	56	26	15
No denomination	54	22	13

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## CHAPTER 8

# CONNECTION TO ISRAEL

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### CHAPTER HIGHLIGHTS

The Baltimore Jewish community has strong ties to Israel, grounded in religious, cultural, and familial connections. Baltimore Jews travel to Israel at higher rates than most Jews in the United States, feel very connected to Israel, and closely follow news about Israel on a regular basis.

- More than half, 59%, of Baltimore Jewish adults have been to Israel at least once.
- Seventeen percent of Jewish adults have traveled with a Jewish organization on a mission or other sponsored trip to Israel. Adults who have traveled to Israel on an educational or volunteer program represent 11% of the population. Twenty-seven percent of age-eligible adults—those younger than 47—have been to Israel on Birthright.
- Eighty percent of Jewish adults feel at least “a little” connected to Israel, and 34% feel “very connected.”
- Nearly all Jewish adults see Israel as a homeland for Jews throughout the world (87%).
- The majority of Jewish adults, 82%, feel at least a little comfortable discussing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and 32% feel very much comfortable.

### TRAVEL TO ISRAEL

Among Baltimore Jewish adults, 59% have been to Israel at least once (Table 8.1). This includes 24% of Jewish adults who have been to Israel only once, 28% who have visited more than once, and 6% who have lived in Israel at some point. The Baltimore rate of travel represents a substantially higher proportion than among US Jews in general, of whom, as of 2013, 43% had been to Israel. The engagement group with the greatest proportion of members who have been to Israel is the Immersed group (87%), followed by the Communal group (67%).

Travel and emotional connection to Israel are deeply linked. As seen in Table 8.1, those with stronger emotional connections to Israel are more likely to have traveled to Israel and visited more often. Eighty-seven percent of those who feel “very much” connected to Israel have been there, compared to 27% who are “not at all” connected.

On average, those who have been to Israel were last there 13 years ago, in 2006. Eighteen percent of Jewish adults went to Israel in the past year, 32% between 2-9 years ago, 26% between 10-19 years ago, and 24% last traveled to Israel at least 20 years ago.

**Table 8.1. Travel to Israel**

	<b>Never (%)</b>	<b>Once (%)</b>	<b>Multiple times (%)</b>	<b>Lived there (%)</b>
All Jewish adults	41	24	28	6
<b>Engagement group</b>				
Familial	72	20	7	1
Personal	58	29	9	5
Involved	54	24	16	6
Communal	33	34	29	5
Immersed	13	14	59	13
<b>Geography</b>				
Baltimore City	33	22	34	11
Baltimore County	43	27	25	4
Carroll & Harford Counties	75	12	13	<1
<b>Age</b>				
23-34	22	23	44	12
35-49	51	20	23	5
50-64	48	24	21	7
65-79	48	26	22	3
80+	24	33	42	<1
<b>Marital status</b>				
Inmarried	30	26	36	9
Intermarried	62	25	11	2
Not married	47	21	26	6
<b>Parent status</b>				
No children in household	45	26	24	5
Children in household	32	20	37	10
<b>Denomination</b>				
Orthodox	11	11	64	14
Conservative	36	29	31	4
Reform	51	30	18	1
No denomination	56	27	11	6
<b>Connection to Israel</b>				
Not at all	73	15	8	3
Little/somewhat	48	30	19	4
Very much	13	23	51	12

## TYPES OF ISRAEL TRAVEL

Overall, 17% of Jewish adults have traveled with a Jewish organization on a mission or other sponsored trip to Israel (Table 8.2). Adults who traveled to Israel on an educational or volunteer program represent 11% of the population. Twenty-seven percent of age-eligible adults—those younger than 47—have been to Israel through Birthright Israel.

Table 8.2. Types of Israel travel

	Birthright Israel (of age eligible; %)	Federation/ organization mission (%)	Education/ volunteer (%)
All Jewish adults	27	17	11
Engagement group			
Familial	18	6	2
Personal	25	7	5
Involved	37	11	5
Communal	35	23	11
Immersed	17	25	28
Geography			
Baltimore City	28	15	18
Baltimore County	24	18	10
Carroll & Harford Counties	17	9	1
Age			
23-34	35	20	25
35-49	14	14	10
50-64	n/a	15	10
65-79	n/a	14	5
80+	n/a	31	7
Marital status			
Inmarried	21	19	15
Intermarried	28	8	5
Not married	32	18	13
Parent status			
No children in household	28	17	10
Children in household	23	17	17
Denomination			
Orthodox	15	17	26
Conservative	33	30	14
Reform	40	15	6
No denomination	24	10	7
Connection to Israel			
Not at all	6	4	2
Little/somewhat	30	18	10
Very much	34	22	22

## EMOTIONAL CONNECTION TO ISRAEL

Consistent with the high rate of travel to Israel is the community's strong emotional attachment to Israel (Table 8.3). Eighty percent of Jewish adults feel at least "a little" connected to Israel, and 34% feel "very connected." By comparison, among the national US Jewish community, 69% feel attached to Israel, including 30% who feel "very" attached. The strongest connections to Israel are found among the Immersed group (70% very much). Nearly all of the Immersed Jews feel a connection to Israel to some extent.

Those who have been to Israel feel more strongly about it, with 63% of those who have gone multiple times and 64% of those who have lived there feeling "very much" connected. In contrast, only 10% of Jews who have never been to Israel feel "very much" connected to Israel.

Table 8.3. Emotional connection to Israel

	Not at all (%)	A little (%)	Somewhat (%)	Very much (%)
All Jewish adults	20	20	26	34
Engagement group				
Familial	49	24	20	7
Personal	19	29	33	20
Involved	38	22	27	13
Communal	12	24	31	33
Immersed	3	5	22	70
Geography				
Baltimore City	19	19	25	37
Baltimore County	20	18	28	33
Carroll & Harford Counties	24	41	21	14
Age				
23-34	20	20	27	33
35-49	24	20	30	26
50-64	21	24	25	30
65-79	19	15	26	41
80+	5	9	30	55
Marital status				
Inmarried	13	16	27	43
Intermarried	33	27	26	14
Not married	24	21	24	30
Parent status				
No children in household	21	21	27	31
Children in household	19	17	25	39
Denomination				
Orthodox	7	2	17	74
Conservative	12	19	29	40
Reform	21	32	33	15
No denomination	30	24	29	18
Travel to Israel				
Never	36	29	25	10
Once	13	22	34	32
Multiple	6	8	23	63
Lived/Israeli	10	3	23	64

## NEWS ABOUT ISRAEL

Seventy-eight percent of Baltimore Jewish adults sought out news about Israel in the past month, 45% of whom did so weekly or less, and 33% of whom did so more than weekly (Table 8.4). The Immersed group follows Israel news most closely, as do those who feel very much connected to Israel or who have traveled to Israel multiple times or lived there. Notably, members of the Personal group seek news about Israel quite frequently, and it is one of the activities they engage in most often.

**Table 8.4. Frequency of seeking news about Israel in past month**

	<b>Never (%)</b>	<b>Weekly or less (%)</b>	<b>More than weekly (%)</b>
All Jewish adults	22	45	33
<b>Engagement group</b>			
Familial	55	39	6
Personal	14	45	41
Involved	31	63	7
Communal	12	55	33
Immersed	6	32	63
<b>Geography</b>			
Baltimore City	17	47	36
Baltimore County	21	43	36
Carroll & Harford Counties	28	56	16
<b>Age</b>			
23-34	26	53	21
35-49	25	46	29
50-64	16	46	38
65-79	17	37	46
80+	11	24	65
<b>Marital status</b>			
Inmarried	12	41	46
Intermarried	35	51	14
Not married	22	49	29
<b>Parent status</b>			
No children in household	19	44	37
Children in household	21	49	30
<b>Denomination</b>			
Orthodox	6	34	60
Conservative	14	43	43
Reform	25	53	23
No denomination	27	49	24
<b>Travel to Israel</b>			
Never	31	45	24
Once	17	50	33
Multiple	9	42	48
Lived/Israeli	4	41	55
<b>Connection to Israel</b>			
Not at all	50	42	8
Little/somewhat	19	56	25
Very much	4	32	64

## VIEWS ABOUT ISRAEL

Respondents were asked if they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements about Israel (Table 8.5). Nearly all respondents view Israel as a homeland for Jews throughout the world (87%). Almost two thirds of Jewish adults, 64%, see Israel as a source of pride, and 60% agree that the country is a lively democratic society. The Baltimore Jewish community is not without its political disagreements with Israel, however. Thirty percent view Israel as a religious fundamentalist society, and only 29% believe Israel is a defender of gender equality.

Table 8.5. Views about Israel, agree or strongly agree

	Homeland for Jews throughout the world (%)	Source of pride (%)	Lively democratic society (%)	Religious fundamentalist society (%)	Defender of gender equality (%)
All Jewish adults	87	64	60	30	29
Engagement group					
Familial	64	35	36	39	20
Personal	85	58	55	37	24
Involved	82	53	35	30	20
Communal	89	71	63	36	34
Immersed	94	81	79	22	34
Geography					
Baltimore City	84	52	54	36	27
Baltimore County	86	70	61	30	29
Carroll & Harford Counties	77	62	55	33	24
Age					
23-34	83	55	53	29	30
35-49	83	57	50	35	24
50-64	86	63	58	32	26
65-79	88	73	69	36	30
80+	92	89	84	28	48
Marital status					
Inmarried	89	70	64	29	30
Intermarried	78	51	46	34	22
Not married	82	58	57	40	31
Parent status					
No children in household	84	63	58	36	29
Children in household	88	63	59	25	26
Denomination					
Orthodox	93	82	78	19	39
Conservative	88	73	67	35	32
Reform	89	66	46	39	26
No denomination	78	49	51	34	22
Travel to Israel					
Never	77	51	45	37	21
Once	90	65	58	36	33
Multiple	93	79	76	25	33
Lived/Israeli	85	66	68	21	32
Connection to Israel					
Not at all	57	18	19	45	12
Little/somewhat	89	65	56	33	25
Very much	96	88	85	23	43

## COMFORT DISCUSSING ISRAEL

Respondents were asked how comfortable they felt discussing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Table 8.6). The majority, 82%, feel at least a little comfortable, and 32% feel very comfortable. Those who have been to Israel, and those who feel very attached to Israel, feel more comfortable discussing the conflict.

The 39% of Jewish adults who felt not at all or only a little comfortable discussing the Israel-Palestinian conflict were asked about the reasons for their discomfort. The most commonly cited reasons were feeling that they did not have a part in the conversation (39%) and not knowing much about the topic (37%). Some simply do not have an opinion on the conflict (15%), and others believe they have a minority opinion on the topic (12%). Five percent are uncomfortable discussing Israel-Palestine because they believe the discourse is too hostile.

**Table 8.6. Comfort expressing opinion on Israeli-Palestinian conflict**

	<b>Not at all (%)</b>	<b>A little (%)</b>	<b>Somewhat (%)</b>	<b>Very much (%)</b>
All Jewish adults	18	21	29	32
Engagement groups				
Familial	29	17	26	28
Personal	16	18	31	35
Involved	33	27	23	17
Communal	17	21	37	26
Immersed	7	13	33	48
Geography				
Baltimore City	14	20	32	34
Baltimore County	21	17	30	32
Carroll & Harford Counties	13	22	39	26
Age				
23-34	21	22	35	22
35-49	18	23	30	29
50-64	18	14	35	34
65-79	17	14	25	44
80+	8	10	31	50
Marital status				
Inmarried	18	16	29	37
Intermarried	18	22	34	26
Not married	17	20	35	29
Parent status				
No children in household	19	18	30	33
Children in household	15	19	33	33
Denomination				
Orthodox	12	8	29	51
Conservative	15	20	31	35
Reform	19	24	35	23
No denomination	21	20	31	27
Travel to Israel				
Never	23	18	31	28
Once	20	21	29	31
Multiple	10	15	33	41
Lived/Israeli	--	--	--	--
Connection to Israel				
Not at all	37	18	22	22
Little/somewhat	16	22	37	25
Very much	9	12	29	50



Table 8.7. Reasons for discomfort expressing opinion on Israeli-Palestinian conflict

	No part in conversation (%)	Don't know much (%)	No opinion (%)	Minority opinion (%)	Discourse feels hostile (%)
Jewish adults uncomfortable discussing Israel	39	37	15	12	5
Engagement group					
Familial	24	29	16	27	3
Personal	45	28	16	14	<1
Involved	31	49	7	15	1
Communal	41	31	19	11	8
Immersed	56	22	13	9	7
Geography					
Baltimore City	48	32	17	13	6
Baltimore County	35	32	15	17	3
Carroll & Harford Counties	20	33	1	16	4
Age					
23-34	45	40	11	10	6
35-49	37	36	7	14	1
50-64	46	24	27	15	1
65-79	24	27	13	24	9
80+	16	20	16	4	23
Marital status					
Inmarried	37	26	12	14	6
Intermarried	39	35	19	14	3
Not married	40	42	17	21	1
Parent status					
No children in household	38	33	16	18	5
Children in household	41	30	12	10	2
Denomination					
Orthodox	36	17	8	10	17
Conservative	34	41	12	13	1
Reform	41	32	17	12	6
No denomination	40	33	15	19	2
Travel to Israel					
Never	29	35	11	17	4
Once	43	33	19	18	6
Multiple	51	29	18	11	2
Lived/Israeli	56	13	17	2	0
Connection to Israel					
Not at all	22	33	16	23	6
Little/somewhat	47	35	15	10	1
Very much	44	22	13	15	10

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## CHAPTER 9

# IN THE WORDS OF COMMUNITY MEMBERS

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Baltimore Jews were given the opportunity to explain, in their own words, the strengths of the community and the areas for improvement. We also asked them to describe which Jewish experiences they find most personally meaningful. These responses, taken together, reinforce the themes presented elsewhere in the report and provide new insights into community needs and opportunities for improvement.

Overall, 1,379 respondents answered open-ended questions asking for their impressions of the strengths of the Baltimore community, as well as the gaps and areas for improvement. Additionally, 1,350 respondents described what experiences they found most personally meaningful.

This chapter summarizes the comments of the respondents who provided responses to these questions; many of these respondents commented on multiple topics. The numbers shown in this chapter indicate the actual number of respondents who mentioned each issue. Topics mentioned by fewer than 50 people are not included in this summary.

## SOCIAL LIFE

Many respondents commented about the social aspects of the Baltimore Jewish community. Of those respondents, 173 felt that the social dynamics and opportunities in the community were positive, while 168 felt those attributes were negative. The remainder felt neutral.

Those who indicated the social aspects of the Baltimore Jewish community were positive focused on the inclusive and unified nature of the community.

*A lot of unity in the Jewish community is a major strength, even though lifestyles can be so different.*

*Everyone that I have met has been very warm and welcoming in the Jewish community.*

*I am always impressed by the Jewish community's sense of belonging and contributing to the local community and the support system to other members of the community.*

In contrast, others felt that socially, the Baltimore Jewish community lacked a sense of inclusion or unity in a few key areas, particularly interdenominationally.

*Dichotomy between Orthodox and rest of community.*

*I feel the Jewish community is much too divided between very Orthodox members and less Orthodox. Many ultra-observant members look down upon those not as observant and disregard and disrespect the rights of those not in their religious community.*

Beyond inter-denominational divides, several respondents indicated that those who relocate to Baltimore have difficulty fully integrating into the community.

*It can be very difficult to break into certain social circles if you were not born and raised in Baltimore. I also found that the only way to get my children a serious religious education was to enroll them in a Jewish day school, because after school Jewish education in this area does not seem to be as large of a priority (due to the abundance of day schools for those that want it).*

A few respondents noted the difficulty meeting or connecting with other Jews.

*It seems difficult to meet Jewish people outside of work if you're not living in a Jewish neighborhood or explicitly going to temple or a Jewish gathering.*

The importance of social aspects of the community are also reflected in the respondents' discussion of what aspects of Jewish life they find most meaningful. Baltimore residents often felt most connected to their community through friends and family, whether during holidays and religious events or simply in social gatherings. Specifically, 333 respondents mentioned friends and family as central to their most meaningful experiences in Jewish life.

*Getting together with Jewish friends and family, celebrating Shabbat, weddings, bat mitzvahs.*

*Being with family.*

*My many, many lifelong friendships in the Baltimore community.*

*Get together with friends and family for activities.*

## RELIGIOUS AND SPIRITUAL LIFE

One hundred eighty-nine respondents described religious and spiritual elements of the community as some of the Baltimore Jewish community's great strengths or areas where there were some gaps. Of these, 109 individuals felt that this aspect of the community was a strength, while 80 felt there were key shortcomings.

For respondents for whom religious and spiritual life is one of the community's great strengths, the diversity of synagogues and their clergy, educational opportunities, and programs is particularly outstanding:

*Baltimore is a very vibrant Jewish community. Lots of diversity in terms of religious and educational options and lots of programming.*

*I am impressed by the variety of congregations and their outreach programs.*

*The diversity of the synagogues, the amazing depth of rabbinic talent, and opportunities for Jewish learning are the strengths.*

*The variety of synagogues in Baltimore allow for an affiliation fit for any interested individual.*

The vast majority of respondents—over 1,200—who provided answers about what they find most meaningful in Jewish life mentioned some form of synagogue life, ritual, or worship as crucial to their experience. For many, these practices and settings become the context in which they connect with family and friends, as well as connect more deeply with Judaism.

*Sharing Jewish traditions with my grandchildren.*

*Being with my family and observing Jewish holidays with them means the most to me.*

*Things that involve my whole family, going to services, attending special programs our synagogue offers and being involved in our synagogue.*

*Seder with my family.*

*Ritual observance*

*Shabbat dinners, lectures, prayers, holidays, learning.*

*The most meaningful experiences are Shabbat and holiday experiences at the synagogue and numerous music and performing arts events.*

*Rituals performed with family (Shabbat, seders, etc.) and personal prayer/reflection time.*

However, some respondents also noted that despite the abundance of options, many members of the Baltimore Jewish community choose not to participate in religious life.

*It seems to me that Baltimoreans believe that living in a Jewish neighborhood is sufficient participation in living Jewishly. This leads to poor participation in religious organizations.*

*Not enough participation in religious activities by other people in the community.*

Some pointed to the high cost of participating in synagogue and other religious activities.

*Everything is much more expensive than non-Jewish activities. Youth groups and summer camps are extremely expensive. Synagogue dues and fees are high.*

Several respondents were particularly concerned about the high costs of synagogue participation for adults ages 65 and older in the community.

*Making seniors pay more for membership than young families.*

*Dues to synagogues should be reduced for seniors.*

*There is a gap in providing synagogue experiences if one is single, older, and without family.*

## ACTIVITIES

Many respondents addressed the plethora of activities available in the Jewish community. Of these, 107 felt the extent and quality of offerings were a great strength of the community.

*There is a varied amount of recreational, cultural, and educational programs available to members of the Jewish community on a regular and frequent basis. It is up to individuals as to how much and how often they want to partake.*

*The strength of Baltimore's Jewish community is its huge variety of religious, social justice, and cultural activities.*

*Strong and plentiful Jewish experience opportunities*

*The strengths are a wide array of activities and experiences.*

Despite the plethora of activities, 41 respondents highlighted some opportunities for growth. In particular, some respondents said they would like more activities simply to socialize without other Jews, without necessarily focusing on Judaism.

*A lot [of the activities] are very Jewish-history/ religiously focused. Sometimes I just want to go to an event and have fun with the people, I don't need it to be all about Judaism.*

A common focus was the demographics targeted in activities. Many single adults, of all ages, are looking for social programs, especially those not focused on dating:

*As a 'middle-aged' single, there is very little programming geared towards my dynamic.*

*As someone who moved to Baltimore as a single adult with no children, I'm just unaware of events/programs available.*

*I am an older, full-time-working, female adult. There are few Jewish evening or weekend activities geared towards me. There is little socially geared towards single Jewish adults (who may not be looking to date).*

*More activities for 30-somethings in Baltimore.*

*Not many programs for singles in their 30s to 40s.*

## JEWISH EDUCATION

Seventy-four respondents made Jewish education the central focus of their comments. For those who felt Jewish education was a strength in the community, comments focused on a range of offerings across denominations, in formal Jewish day school settings and as offerings from synagogues.

*Jewish day schools for families with a wide range of observance levels.*

*Strong Jewish schools and yeshivas, every variety of Orthodox organization and service, high level of secular and religious education.*

*The strengths are that each synagogue or outreach program offers educational programs and lectures on a variety of Jewish subjects, such as Torah study, Jewish history, Israel, politics, social issues, etc. There are always programs available for a variety of interest.*

However, many respondents lamented the high cost of providing Jewish education for their children.

*Cost of Jewish education is a problem.*

*The cost and distance for Hebrew school and joining a congregation.*

Despite the significant support for Jewish education from communal organizations, some respondents felt that Jewish education is still not receiving the support it deserves and requires for the health of the community.

*Education, education, education is the gap. There is not enough emphasis, support, and financial resources for Jewish day schools. Public education is not the answer nor an alternative. You can collect all the survey data you want... without the proper Jewish education, we cannot endure or be strong on any level.*

*It is with great sadness that I find one of the biggest gaps in the Jewish community is that Jewish education does not seem to be of the utmost importance to The Associated. Through the mailings they share, they seem far more interested in non-Jewish causes and in specific agendas rather than in the future of the Jewish people.*

*Not enough support for the Jewish day schools from officials.*

Jewish study and education is also central for Jewish meaning in daily life for Baltimore Jews. Two hundred ninety-five respondents mentioned education and Jewish text study as core to how they find meaning in everyday Jewish life.

*Seeing my daughter enjoy Hebrew school at an egalitarian synagogue and grow to be a competent Jewish person.*

*Membership and participation in educational activities.*

*Deep Torah study, daily access to egalitarian prayer.*

*The Jewish education programs my kids went to and the social services they provide are excellent.*

*Applying Jewish texts and rituals to issues of today.*

*Educational activities.*

*Adult learning classes.*

*Torah study!*

## RESOURCES

Fifty-two respondents focused on the collection and allocation of financial resources. The vast majority, 42, felt that The Associated has been effective at raising funds and distributing them to various organizations and agencies. Some, however, take issue with resource utilization. Respondents who described the system as a strength focused on the depth of resources that the community has at its disposal.



*The community is well organized and provides good resources to the core of the Jewish community. It also helps fund a wide range of social programs and services for the Jewish community and beyond.*

*The community is very prominent, well funded, and highly organized.*

*Many resources are available.*

*The Associated system of raising funds collectively for all the organizations and agencies under one umbrella.*

Those who spoke of resources as an area for growth focused primarily on the allocation and utilization of resources.

*I think that there needs to be increased funding for Jewish day schools. I think that money raised through a Jewish agency should be spent solely on Jewish needs. I can give money to other causes. When I give to The Associated, I expect that money to be used for the Jewish community and not for the wider community.*

Others discussed the concentration of resources in the City of Baltimore and Pikesville and described the perceived comparative lack of investment in the rest of the area.

*On the other hand, it could be said that this is a gap—many parts of Maryland (including my home county, where I was raised—Harford) have few synagogues and Jewish resources. Therefore, having the Jewish community primarily concentrated in one part of Baltimore may reasonably be considered a gap.*

*They do well in Baltimore, I suppose. But they do not support the Jewish community in Annapolis and Anne Arundel County.*

## REGIONAL LIMITATIONS

Fifty-two individuals highlighted regional limitations as a constraint on their ability to fully engage the community. These comments focused on the concentration of Jewish institutions and resources in Baltimore itself, even when some feel the community has become more decentralized in its geographic distribution. Although the particular areas where respondents felt there were gaps differs, there were a few mentioned frequently, including areas of Baltimore County outside of Pikesville/Owings Mills. Many Jews in Anne Arundel County look to Baltimore and The Associated for support, but the county is neither part of The Associated's catchment area nor part of any other federated area. The Associated provides some support, but its focus is directed primarily toward the Jewish community within its catchment area.

*Access to temples outside of the historic locations. The community has decentralized from where I grew up, but the temples have not moved out to other communities. Distance and time makes it a hardship to participate with a temple locally. It's even been hard to determine a Jewish studies plan for my oldest given the distance of our home to the area temples. With most households having two working parents and weekends being dedicated to sports, it makes it hard to determine how to give him a proper Jewish education.*

*Anne Arundel County, particularly Annapolis, is almost complete ignored/excluded by both DC and Baltimore organizations. If you are in Pikesville/Stevenson there is ample resources and programs, but as you move farther out, less and less.*

*No central location to live for young Jewish Reform and Conservative families anymore.*

*The Baltimore Jewish community has neglected those who live outside the Pikesville/Owings Mills area. We were never 'welcomed' by the Jewish community when we moved to town—we live outside the eruv. They need to learn about how the community has diversified and lives all around the area—the city, Timonium, Cockeysville etc.*

## SERVICES, AID, AND SUPPORT

Over 100 respondents commented on the various social and human service offerings the Baltimore Jewish community provides—or falls short in providing. Of those respondents, 47 spoke of service provision as a strength of the community, while 22 spoke of perceived shortcomings.

Many praised the high quality of support for physical medical needs, supporting low-income and disabled households, and the work performed by Jewish Community Services. Many of the same individuals, however, also saw shortcomings in the availability or quality of care for mental health and drug addiction support services. In essence, there is much being done well, but also some areas where needs are not being met.

*I think Baltimore provides an amazing array of agencies and services for its Jewish community.*

*Amazing support and volunteer organizations for community members with medical need.*

*Limited resources or supports within the community for people with mental health problems.*

*If you are lower income or have a disability, many services are available. If you are not part of those groups, many services are not available, even if you are willing to pay for the services.*

*Strengths are providing supportive services for aging populations, disabilities, youth programming. Gaps—services for mental illness and drug addiction.*

*Lack of services for special needs young and adults.*

*There should be more help for elderly and economically disadvantaged.*

*More in home support.*

## LOOKING TOWARD THE FUTURE

The words of community members, taken together with findings presented in earlier chapters, provide a detailed and nuanced sociodemographic portrait of the Baltimore Jewish community in 2019. Baltimore is unique among Jewish communities in the United States, with one of the highest proportions of Orthodox Jews of any community in the United States and roughly equal numbers of adherents to the three largest denominations. The community's synagogues are particularly strong, but the majority of households are not involved. The community has very high levels of engagement in Jewish life overall, and high rates of children's enrollment in Jewish educational programming in particular. However, even though many families have lived in the Baltimore area for generations, many members do not necessarily feel deeply connected to the local Jewish community. The community is mostly middle class, but also includes a substantial number of families and individuals with significant financial need. These dynamics present the community with challenges and opportunities to make the community even stronger.

This study measured demographics, participation in programs, institutional engagement, home-based behavior, unmet needs, and many other aspects of Jewish life in Baltimore, using the latest social scientific methods. The Baltimore Jewish community has invested many resources in enhancing programs, reaching out to diverse populations, and building ties within the Jewish community and to the surrounding community. We hope that this snapshot of the community will stimulate discussion about how best to take advantage of the Baltimore Jewish community's many strengths, face its challenges, and plan for its future.

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## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout the report, estimates from 2010 are based on a reanalysis of the 2010 study, as described in the methodological appendix, Appendix A. Unless otherwise noted, 2019 estimates do include Harford County, which was not part of the 2010 study.

<sup>2</sup> Saxe, L., Sasson, T., & Aronson, J. K. (2015). Pew's portrait of American Jewry: A reassessment of the assimilation narrative. In *American Jewish Year Book 2014* (pp. 71-81). Springer, Cham.

<sup>3</sup> Throughout the report, estimates from 2010 are based on a reanalysis of the 2010 study, as described in the methodological appendix, Appendix A. Unless otherwise noted, 2019 estimates do include Harford County, which was not part of the 2010 study.

<sup>4</sup> Ukeles, J.B. and Miller, R. (2011). *The 2010 Baltimore Jewish community study*. Baltimore: The Associated: Jewish Community Federation of Baltimore.

<sup>5</sup> Pew Research Center. (2013). *A portrait of Jewish Americans: Findings from a Pew Research Center survey of US Jews*. Washington, DC: Pew Research Center.

<sup>6</sup> Throughout the report, estimates from 2010 are based on a reanalysis of the 2010 study, as described in the methodological appendix, Appendix A. Unless otherwise noted, 2019 estimates do include Harford County, which was not part of the 2010 study.

<sup>7</sup> Based on US Census data for 2010 and American Community Survey one-year estimates for 2017 and 2018 (where available).

<sup>8</sup> If the Jews of multiple religions were excluded from the total Jewish population, as was done in the Pew study, the resulting proportion of Jews by religion would be 82%.

<sup>9</sup> The definitions used in this study are similar but not identical to those used in the Pew Research Center's A portrait of Jewish Americans (Pew Research Center, 2013). Adults who are Jewish and a second religion, if they were raised Jewish or have Jewish parents, are classified by Pew as "Jewish Background" and are not included among the Jewish "count." This study classifies them as "Jews of Multiple Religions" and includes them in the count of both Jewish adults and Jewish children.

<sup>10</sup> Throughout the report, estimates from 2010 are based on a reanalysis of the 2010 study, as described in the Methodological Appendix, Appendix A. Unless otherwise noted, 2019 estimates do include Harford County, which was not part of the 2010 study.

<sup>11</sup> The components of the population do not add up to the total due to rounding.

<sup>12</sup> Throughout the report, estimates from 2010 are based on a reanalysis of the 2010 study, as described in the methodological appendix, Appendix A. Unless otherwise noted, 2019 estimates do include Harford County, which was not part of the 2010 study.

<sup>13</sup> The original 2010 dataset yielded an estimate of 1,600 non-Jewish children in Jewish households, based on 56 children. There are too few cases to reliably revise the estimate based on the CMJS/SSRI reanalysis.

<sup>14</sup> Pew Research Center, 2013.

<sup>15</sup> Because children's denominational identities were not asked on the survey, analyses including children's denominations were conducted by assigning children denominational values equal to those of their parents or guardians. In the event that more than denomination could apply, the more traditionally observant denomination was imputed.

<sup>16</sup> For both maps, each dot represents 80 Jewish households who live in a given ZIP code. The dots are randomly placed in the ZIP codes in which the households the dots represent reside. No dot should be interpreted to reflect the specific address of any given survey respondent or member of the community.

<sup>17</sup> See Aronson, J. K., Saxe, L., Kadushin, C., Boxer, M., and Brookner, M. (2018). A new approach to understanding contemporary Jewish engagement. *Contemporary Jewry*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12397-018-9271-8>

<sup>18</sup> Data from the American Jewish Population Project. The Baltimore Jewish Community Study suggests that 1% of Jewish adults identify as a person of color, but the confidence intervals of the two estimates overlap. It is believed the number derived from AJPP is more accurate. <https://ajpp.brandeis.edu/>

<sup>19</sup> 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.

<sup>20</sup> Pew Research Center, 2013.

<sup>21</sup> Also see Aronson, J.K., et al. (2018). A new approach to understanding contemporary Jewish engagement. *Contemporary Jewry*, 39, 91-113.

<sup>22</sup> A description of latent class analysis and details of how it was applied to our data are provided in Appendix C.

<sup>23</sup> For a breakdown of the proportions of each denomination that belong to each engagement group, see Appendix B.

<sup>24</sup> Pew Research Center, 2013.

<sup>25</sup> For all comparisons throughout this report, 2010 estimates are derived from CMJS/SSRI reanalysis. See Appendix A for details.

<sup>26</sup> Twenty-six percent of respondents specifically indicated that they preferred not to answer the income question and are excluded from this analysis. However, of respondents who did not answer the income question, 2% indicated that their standard of living was “prosperous,” 39% said they were “living very comfortably,” 45% said they were “living reasonably comfortably,” and 13% said they were “just getting along.” Because these numbers are consistent with the standard of living reported by respondents who did answer the income question, it is likely that results would not be altered substantially if all respondents answered the income question.

<sup>27</sup> Based on data from the American Community Survey’s 2017 five-year estimates, which are the most recent data available.

<sup>28</sup> There is no statistically significant difference between Orthodox and non-Orthodox grandparents in the proportion who help pay for their grandchildren’s Jewish educations.

<sup>29</sup> Olitzky, K.M., & Judson, D. (2002). *The rituals and practices of a Jewish life: A handbook for personal spiritual renewal*. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing; Olitzky, K.M., & Olitzky, A.S. (2015). *New membership & financial alternatives for the American synagogue: From traditional dues to fair share to gifts from the heart*. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing.

<sup>30</sup> Total adds up to more than 100% because some households are members of more than one congregation with different affiliations.

<sup>31</sup> Pew Research Center, 2013.

<sup>32</sup> Pew Research Center, 2013.

<sup>33</sup> To be clear, Annapolis and Anne Arundel County are not part of The Associated’s catchment area.

### Leadership

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