



**Jewish
Federations**
of North America

2026 LGBTQ+ Jewish Engagement Report



Executive Summary

Urgent Need

In the months following October 7th, 2023, Jewish communal life experienced a historic increase in participation. According to the Jewish Federations of North America, 43 percent of American Jews reported seeking deeper engagement, including many who had previously been minimally involved. This surge reflected a widespread desire for connection, solidarity, and belonging at a moment of collective strain.

At the same time, Federation data shows that engagement among historically marginalized Jews, including LGBTQ+ Jews, Jews of Color, Jews with disabilities, and financially vulnerable Jews, has declined more rapidly than in the broader Jewish population. For LGBTQ+ households in particular, year-over-year drops in engagement have been significant, even as concern about antisemitism and the desire for belonging remain high. While participation has increased overall, the current moment is fragile, with those most in need of a stable connection disengaging fastest.

Over the past decade, Jewish institutions have expanded public commitments to LGBTQ+ inclusion through statements, Pride-related programming, and increased visibility. However, Federation research consistently shows that sustained engagement depends not on access alone, but on whether individuals experience genuine belonging. Jewish communal belonging is when people feel secure and at home in Jewish spaces. Post-October 7th, many LGBTQ+ Jews report navigating heightened antisemitism in broader LGBTQ+ environments while encountering inconsistency, limited responsiveness, or internal tensions within Jewish communal settings, as well as structural barriers related to access and participation. While marginalized Jews may find personal meaning in Jewish life, that meaning does not always translate into belonging within larger Jewish communal structures.

LGBTQ+-specific engagement is central to building the next generation of LGBTQ+ lay leaders and serves as a primary pathway to identify, engage, and activate their leadership. Engagement is driven less by program volume than by how experiences are structured and supported, with nearly 90% of respondents citing LGBTQ+ Jewish gatherings as their primary entry point into Jewish life. Identity-specific spaces function as critical infrastructure for connection, leadership development, and long-term engagement. These findings underscore the need for intentional investment in leadership pipelines and scalable, relationship-based models. Without this shift, the pipeline for future LGBTQ+ Jewish leadership will remain constrained, and long-term belonging will remain out of reach for too many LGBTQ+ Jews.



Purpose of the Survey

This survey examines how LGBTQ+ Jews and their loved ones experience engagement and belonging within Jewish communal life, and where gaps persist. The survey is intended to inform strategic decision-making related to LGBTQ+ Jewish engagement, including engagement with lay leaders, parents, grandparents, and families. It is not a program catalog, but a framework for strengthening inclusion, access, and sustained participation across the communal ecosystem. The findings point to investing in clear, repeatable, relationship-centered engagement pathways; shared standards for inclusion and accessibility; and institutional capacity to respond consistently during periods of strain as practical levers for trust, retention, and long-term stability.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a mixed-methods survey design to collect both quantitative and qualitative data on the needs, interests, and experiences of LGBTQ+ Jews across geographic regions in North America. The instrument combined structured closed-ended items (e.g., multiple-choice, check-all-that-apply, frequency scales) with open-ended qualitative questions to capture nuance and context in respondents' lived experiences. The survey was designed to assess demographic characteristics, program interests, accessibility needs, post-October 7th concerns, and desired forms of community engagement. This informal data is exploratory and not intended to be statistically representative, unlike the Jewish Federations community study that identified the Surge. Instead, it offers insight into members of the LGBTQ+ community who are already engaged in Jewish communal life on some level.

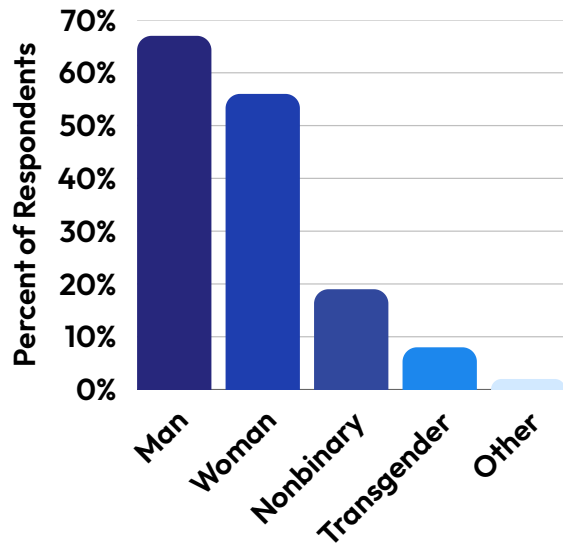
Limitations

This survey is based on a relatively small, non-random sample of LGBTQ+ Jewish respondents in North America. The sample is drawn predominantly from individuals with an existing relationship to the Jewish Federations system, which may influence both respondent composition and the range of perspectives represented. These constraints should be considered when interpreting the findings and their implications for broader community engagement strategies.



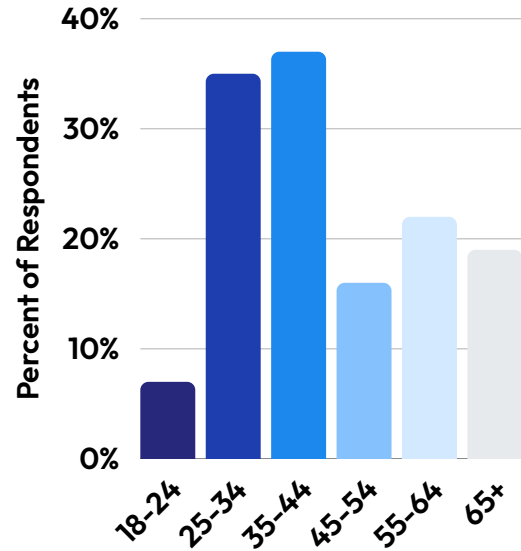
Demographic Profile of Respondents

Gender Identity



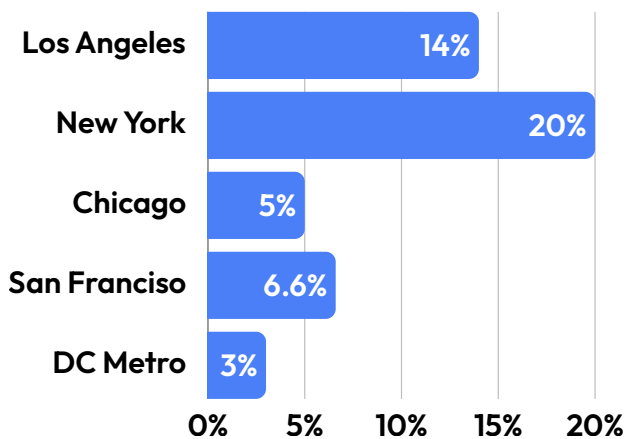
Gender identity: Man (49.3%), Woman (41.2%), Nonbinary/Genderqueer/Genderfluid (14%), Transgender (5.9%), with write-ins such as Intersex and Femme.

Age



Largest Age groups: 35-44 (27.2%) followed by 25-34 (25.7%), 55-64 (16.2%), and 65+ (14%)

Geographic Representation



Respondents represent 62 communities with significant representation from New York 20%, Los Angeles 14%, Chicago 5%, San Francisco 6.6%, and the DC metro 3%, with smaller numbers from other U.S. states and Canada.

Racial/Ethnic Identity: White (76.3%), MENA (11.85%), Latino/a (2.96%), Black (3.7%), Asian (2.2%), and 19 "Other" write-ins primarily describing Jewish ethnic identity (Ashkenazi, Sephardi, Mizrahi)



Findings

Topline Findings

- Gathering with the LGBTQ+ Jewish community emerged as the dominant driver of engagement in Jewish life, cited by nearly nine in ten respondents.
- Sustained engagement emerges when LGBTQ+ Jews have access to both identity-specific community spaces and meaningful participation across Jewish communal life.
- Relationship-based community experiences emerged as the preferred engagement format over education-based engagement, with 78% of respondents citing this.
- More than half of respondents described barriers to full participation connected to LGBTQ+ identity and intersecting life circumstances.
- Respondents described experiences of antisemitism in non-Jewish LGBTQ+ spaces alongside challenges with inclusion and belonging within Jewish communal settings.

1. Engagement, Interest, and Drivers

Engagement interest among LGBTQ+ Jews is high and strongly identity-driven.

- 87% of respondents identified LGBTQ+ Jewish identity and community as a primary area of interest, making it the most frequently cited driver of engagement in the survey.
- Engagement interest is shaped by opportunities for connection, continuity, and relationship-building but do not guarantee participation.

2. Political Polarization and Demand for Zionist LGBTQ+ Jewish Spaces

After October 7th, respondents report increased strain alongside a stronger pull toward Jewish community, with Zionist-affirming LGBTQ+ Jewish spaces influencing engagement.

- Exclusion or safety concerns in non-Jewish LGBTQ+ spaces tied to antisemitism and anti-Zionist rhetoric
- Availability of Zionist-affirming LGBTQ+ Jewish spaces impacts participation



3. Conditions of Belonging and Inclusion

Respondents link a sense of belonging to environments where their LGBTQ+ and Jewish identities are recognized without assumption, friction, or explanation.

- Belonging is strengthened through responsiveness to LGBTQ+ needs, including clear access points, flexibility, and support that reflects varied experiences.
- Belonging is constrained by access barriers, with cost and accessibility frequently determining whether respondents can participate at all.
- When inclusion is inconsistent or performative, some respondents limit participation or disengage despite strong interest.

4. Intersectional Identities and Compounded Barriers

Approximately 46% of respondents describe how intersecting identities shape their experiences, often creating additional barriers to participation.

- LGBTQ+ Jews of Color report navigating both racial and LGBTQ+ marginalization, including limited representation
- Disabled and neurodivergent respondents cite challenges with accessibility, sensory environments, and chronic illness
- Cost, geography, and life stage (including age and family structure) often create additional barriers to participation

5. Denominational Contexts and Program Formats Shape How People Engage

Engagement is more accessible in settings that do not assume religious fluency or adherence to a singular Jewish life path.

- Orthodox and religiously observant respondents describe navigating gendered ritual expectations and structured communal norms, including experiences where participation requires managing how LGBTQ+ identity is expressed within traditional frameworks.
- Secular and culturally Jewish respondents report a stronger connection to spaces centered on relationships, culture, and shared experience.
- Respondents across denominations cite gaps in programming tied to life stage, family structure, and level of religious practice.



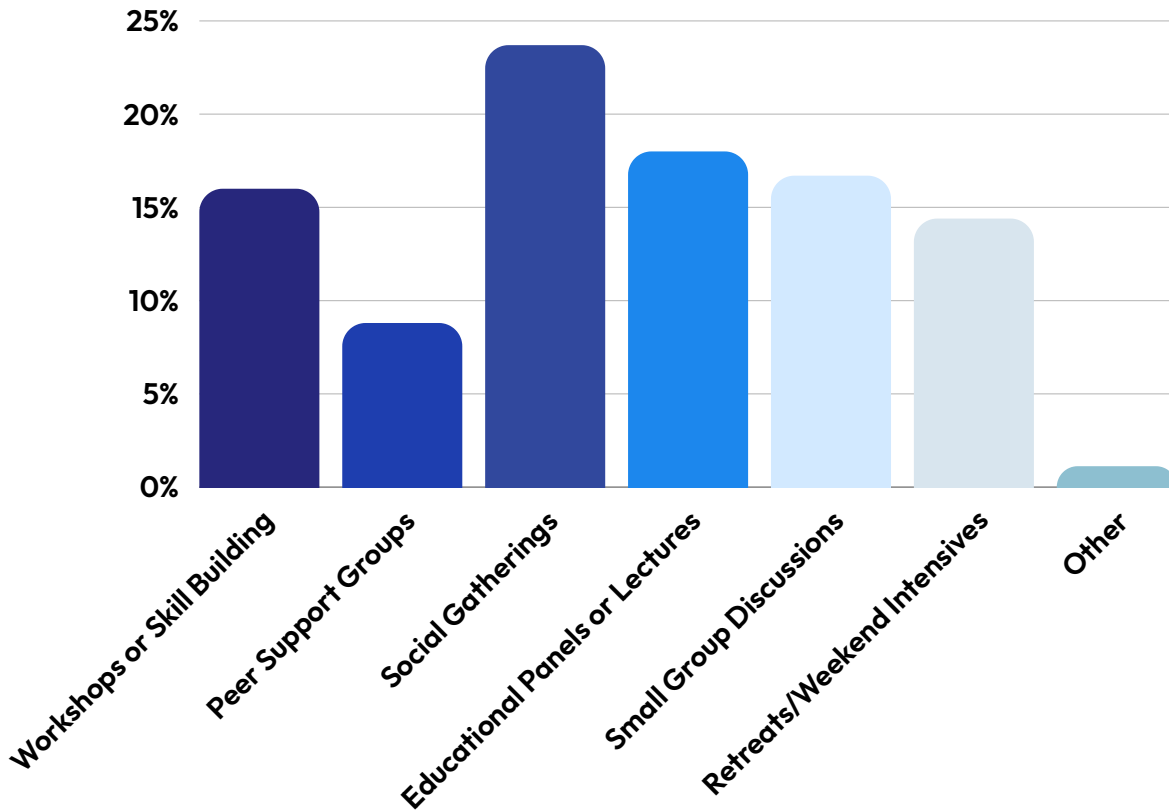
6. Experiences With Federations

Respondents describe Federations as playing an important role in LGBTQ+ engagement, but not one that is consistently visible or accessible across communities.

- Access to Federation-supported LGBTQ+ programming differs by location, with some respondents calling for greater investment in LGBTQ+ initiatives
- High-impact Federation experiences, particularly missions, are described as meaningful entry points into Jewish communal engagement
- Respondents express interest in Federations as conveners of ongoing networks, including demand for professional meetups and spaces that facilitate sustained connection among LGBTQ+ Jews



What types of program formats do you prefer? (Select all that apply)



Findings Note: Organizational readiness is a key factor in whether interest in LGBTQ+ engagement translates into sustained participation. Even when programs align with respondents' interests, engagement depends on whether organizations clearly communicate LGBTQ+ inclusion, have the staff and leadership capacity to support relationship-centered programming, and respond consistently during moments of tension or strain.



Programmatic Needs and Priorities

What LGBTQ+ community members say they need

Survey responses consistently indicate demand for sustained, relationship-centered engagement that supports connection, identity affirmation, and psychological safety. The strongest areas of interest include LGBTQ+ Jewish identity and community (87%), Jewish learning (60%), arts and culture (59%), and relationship building (54%). Respondents are seeking experiences that integrate Jewish identity, community, and relationships rather than single-issue or transactional programming. LGBTQ+ Jewish community members prefer program formats that build connection over time. Social gatherings are the most preferred format (78%), followed by small-group discussions (55%) and retreats or intensives (48%), with lectures or panels also drawing strong interest (60%).

Across write-in responses, respondents identify persistent gaps that limit participation, including limited mental health supports, incomplete disability accommodations, financial barriers to participation, and underrepresentation of LGBTQ+ Jews across race, age, family structure, and life stage. Respondents also highlight the need for identity-specific affinity spaces, including trans-specific programming, LGBTQ+ Jews of Color cohorts, disability-affirming spaces, and offerings for parents, childfree adults, and older LGBTQ+ Jews.

Respondents emphasize the need for flexible, low-commitment options. For virtual programs, most favor occasional or as-needed participation (45%) or monthly offerings (29%). For in-person engagement, the majority prefer occasional (49%) or monthly (30%) options.

Hybrid and virtual models are repeatedly named as critical for reducing barriers related to geography, disability, chronic illness, caregiving responsibilities, and cost.

Emerging trends or priority areas:

- Need for explicitly safe LGBTQ+ Zionist spaces
- Stronger Jewish LGBTQ infrastructure
- Peer-led micro-communities and long-term cohort models
- Identity-specific affinity spaces (trans, sapphic, disabled, JOC, and others)
- Educational offerings addressing antisemitism, Israel-related tensions, and community fracture
- Creative and cultural engagement opportunities
- Robust hybrid models that broaden access and minimize barriers



Implications for the Jewish Communal Field

LGBTQ+ engagement depends less on the number of programs and more on how they are designed and supported. For Jewish Federations, this presents a clear opportunity to engage and develop a younger, emerging generation of LGBTQ+ lay leaders through innovative, dynamic and intentional programming.

Recommendations

Key Recommended Actions for Organizations and Funders

1. Integrate LGBTQ+ engagement as core communal infrastructure, rather than supplemental or episodic programming.
2. Prioritize relational approaches that support ongoing connection rather than one-time experiences.
3. Support both broader participation and identity-specific community, ensuring LGBTQ+ Jews can engage fully in Jewish communal life while also building peer connections.
4. Use data to guide an inclusive strategy, assessing gaps between stated commitments and lived experience.
5. Invest in leadership and capacity building, equipping professionals and lay leaders to foster a sense of belonging across diverse local contexts.

For Jewish Federations

Federations can model LGBTQ+ engagement as a central entry point into Jewish communal life for LGBTQ+ Jews by demonstrating clear, consistent practices for inclusion and belonging. By aligning institutions around relationship-centered approaches and leveraging their convening power to build partnerships, Federations can strengthen trust, support LGBTQ+ Jews across spaces, and tap into an underserved but eager community, including a younger generation of emerging lay leaders. By prioritizing funding for engagement infrastructure, including staffing, facilitation capacity, coordination, and expanded access to a wide range of supports, Federations can strengthen engagement with LGBTQ+ Jews throughout North America.



For Funders

High-impact investment areas

Funders can increase impact by pairing program support with the infrastructure that makes participation sustainable, including staffing time for ongoing relationship building, facilitation, follow-up, and accessible participation options. This should include direct investment in LGBTQ+ Jewish organizations as core community infrastructure, as well as support for Jewish nonprofits and Federations implementing inclusive practices within non LGBTQ specific program lines.

Fieldbuilding Opportunities

Funders are well-positioned to strengthen the Jewish communal field by supporting shared learning and coordination that improves the quality and consistency of LGBTQ+ engagement across institutions. This includes investing in partnerships among LGBTQ+ Jewish organizations, Jewish nonprofits, and Federations to test and adapt engagement models that emphasize relationship building, accessibility, and integration within non-LGBTQ-specific program lines. Funding applied learning cohorts, shared convenings, and documentation of practice-based insights allows effective approaches to travel across communities without requiring each organization to start from scratch. These field-building investments help translate local innovation into broader communal impact while respecting the central role of LGBTQ+ Jewish organizations as community infrastructure.

Funding gaps the data reveals

While this study offers valuable insight, there has not been a comprehensive, nationwide study of LGBTQ+ Jewish demographics, engagement patterns, mental health needs, and experiences of belonging to date. Funders can play a critical role by supporting a more robust national research effort that deepens and updates the field's knowledge base and informs long-term strategy. At the organizational level, the data also point to persistent underfunding of the less visible components that make engagement durable, including sustained relationship-building, accessibility accommodations, and access to mental health and identity-specific supports. Flexible, multi-year funding that underwrites these needs would help stabilize engagement efforts and better support LGBTQ+ Jews and their loved ones over time.



Quotes from Survey Respondents

“I didn’t really even know where to find Jewish queer community. I didn’t really know where to find Jewish community, period.”

“There are times when we need to be in community with other LGBTQ+ Jews, and other times when we want to be visible in the larger community.”

“I started organizing and hosting LGBTQ+ Jewish events in {my community} because I wasn’t seeing it, and I learned there was a big need for people in this intersection to be with each other in a light, celebratory, and supportive space where they could be their whole selves.”

“I loved the JFNA Pride Mission and would love to do more programming connecting the Israeli and American Jewish LGBTQ communities.”

“I appreciated having a space to talk about being queer and Jewish because a lot of queer spaces are now anti-Zionist.”

“Too often, LGBTQ+ Jews have been marginalized and demonized by the larger LGBTQ+ community... It has become difficult to be openly Jewish in some LGBTQ+ contexts.”

“I feel very alone.”

“I can’t afford any of the programming that is offered.”

“I am disabled and chronic pain complicates in-person access. Just have somewhere clear I can reach out to get what I need and be understanding if I need to cancel.”

“The Pride Shabbat felt a little performative and like a box was being checked off rather than a heartfelt experience.”

“Jewish LGBTQ+ adults need more in Jewish circles than just a social or Pride Shabbat opportunity.”

“Don’t forget trans folks or disabled folks. A lot of us have lost access to support from non-Jewish communities, so you’re all we have.”



Conclusion

The findings of this survey point to a clear reality: interest in Jewish engagement among LGBTQ+ Jews is strong, but participation is often conditional. Respondents consistently express a desire to engage while also naming specific conditions that determine whether engagement feels possible, sustainable, and worth the effort. Across the data, visible signals of LGBTQ+ inclusion, clarity of expectations, psychological safety, and program designs that support relationships over time emerge as central to trust and continued participation. When these conditions are present, engagement deepens. When they are inconsistent or unclear, engagement becomes episodic or fragile, even among individuals with strong commitment to Jewish life.

Taken together, the findings make clear that LGBTQ+ Jewish engagement functions as core communal infrastructure, not supplemental programming. One-time initiatives and symbolic gestures do not address these dynamics. LGBTQ+ Jews are instead seeking continuity, accessibility, and environments that allow them to participate fully without managing identity-based risk.

The data also reflects heightened strain at the intersection of Jewish and LGBTQ+ identity. Many respondents describe exclusion in non-Jewish LGBTQ+ spaces alongside uneven experiences of belonging within Jewish communal settings. Rather than withdrawing from Jewish life, they are actively seeking Jewish spaces that offer safety, predictability, and affirmation across diverse identities and life circumstances.

The stakes are significant. Conservative estimates suggest that 400,000 to 550,000 LGBTQ+ Jews live in North America, a figure likely understated given higher LGBTQ+ identification among younger adults and persistent undercounting of gender-diverse and non-disclosing individuals. At this scale, LGBTQ+ Jews represent a substantial part of the Jewish communal ecosystem, including its future leadership and donor base. The findings of this report point toward the need for sustained investment, structural integration, and long-term strategy. Ensuring full, safe, and dignified participation for LGBTQ+ Jews supports the vitality and long-term resilience of North American Jewish life.

These findings point to the need for a more comprehensive and representative study of the North American LGBTQ+ Jews within the next 12 months to inform future investment, strategy, and decision-making. Without timely investment in this work, the field risks missing a critical opportunity to engage a large, motivated population of LGBTQ+ Jews actively seeking meaningful connection and belonging to Jewish communal life.



Appendices

- [2026 LGBTQ+ Survey Question Set](#)
- [Detailed Data Tables](#)
- [Glossary of LGBTQ+ terms used in the report](#)

