



2021 Kansas City Jewish Community Study



Jewish Federation
OF GREATER KANSAS CITY

 **NORC** at the
University of
Chicago

Brandeis

COHEN CENTER FOR
MODERN JEWISH STUDIES
STEINHARDT SOCIAL
RESEARCH INSTITUTE

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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 sociodemographic data on the Jewish community.



To the Kansas City Jewish Community,

On behalf of the Board of Directors of the Jewish Federation of Greater Kansas City we are pleased to present this comprehensive population and demographic study of the Greater Kansas City Jewish community. This study, the first of its kind since 1985, provides a fresh portrait of our local Jewish community and will give us needed insight toward meeting the current needs of our community and building a vibrant, thriving community into the future.

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 in our community live with disabilities? How do we connect to Israel? This study answers these and many other questions relevant to the present and future of our community.

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

Thank you to our local volunteers and professionals who have guided the study from inception to publication. Thank you also to our community partner institutions, whose participation in the study was invaluable.

We are extremely proud of the successful completion of this study and confident that these data will be instrumental in helping the Jewish Federation and all local Jewish institutions work together to build a stronger and more dynamic Jewish community.

We now begin the process of convening the community to realize the benefits that the study is intended to achieve. We look forward to a wide range of discussions, insights, and initiatives that will emerge from our collective review of this information.

May we all continue to go from strength to strength,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Amanda K. Morgan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Amanda K. Morgan
Chair

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Helene Lotman". The signature is cursive and elegant, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Dr. Helene Lotman
President and CEO

JEWISH FEDERATION OF GREATER KANSAS CITY ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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We once again thank the expert and hardworking staffs of our research partners: Brandeis University's Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies and the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago.

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Our sincere gratitude to everyone involved in this project for making it happen, including the respondents—this study is vitally important for our greater Kansas City Jewish community, both now and into the future.

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To the 989 respondents who completed the survey. Without their willingness to spend time answering questions about their lives, there could be no study.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2021 Greater Kansas City Jewish Community Study employed innovative, state-of-the-art methods to create a comprehensive portrait of the size, characteristics, attitudes, and behaviors of the present-day Jewish community in Kansas City and the surrounding area. Where possible, the study also provides national context by comparing findings to the results of the Pew Research Center's 2020 study of the US Jewish community (published while this study was collecting data in the Greater Kansas City area).

This report is based on survey data collected from 989 Jewish households in Greater Kansas City. The surveys were completed between April and July 2021. This study is intended to be a first step in identifying communal trends; generating questions to explore; and determining strategies, programs, and policies to enhance Jewish life in Greater Kansas City. Specifically, the study seeks to:

- Estimate the number of Jewish adults and children in the community, as well as the number of non-Jewish adults and children residing in Jewish households
- Describe the community in terms of age and gender, geographic distribution, health and economic well-being, and other sociodemographic traits
- Measure participation in Jewish communal programs and organizations
- Assess the multifaceted cultural, communal, and religious expressions of Judaism that constitute Jewish engagement
- Assess attitudes toward Judaism, the Jewish community in Greater Kansas City and around the world, and Israel

Demographics

- The Greater Kansas City Jewish community numbers approximately 28,300 adults and children, of whom 22,100 are Jewish, living in 12,600 households. These households include (totals rounded to the nearest hundred):
 - 18,400 Jewish adults
 - 3,600 Jewish children
 - 5,200 non-Jewish adults
 - 1,100 non-Jewish children
- The mean age of Jewish adults in Greater Kansas City is 53, and the median is 60, somewhat older than the national median age of Jewish adults, 49. The mean age of all Jewish individuals in Greater Kansas City, including children, is 46, and the median age is 55.
- Twenty-two percent of Jewish households in Greater Kansas City include children under age 18.
- The individual intermarriage rate (i.e., the proportion of married Jewish adults with a non-Jewish spouse) is 41%, comparable to the national average.
- Forty-four percent of Jewish adults in Greater Kansas City identify as Reform, slightly higher than the national average of 37%. Greater Kansas City's proportions of Conservative Jews (18%) and Jews of no particular denomination (32%) are nearly identical to the national

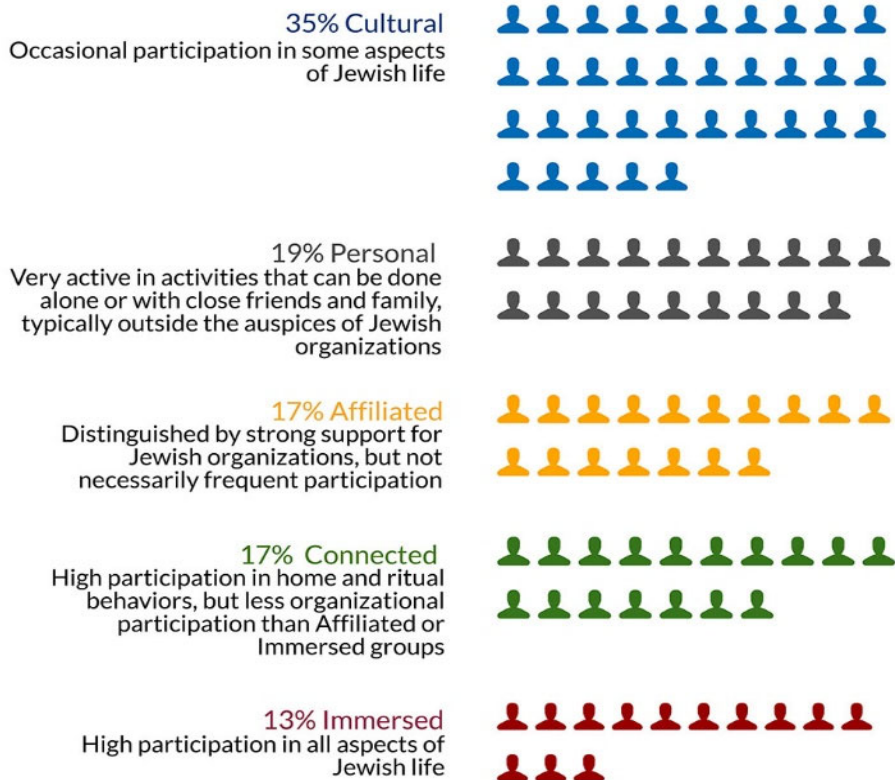
averages, but there are fewer Orthodox Jews (4%) and Jews who identify with other denominations (2%).

- Six percent of Jewish adults in Greater Kansas City identify as LGBTQ.
- Four percent of Jewish adults in Greater Kansas City grew up in Russian-speaking households.
- Four percent of Jewish adults in Greater Kansas City identify as Israeli citizens.
- Four percent of Jewish adults in Greater Kansas City identify as Hispanic or with any racial group other than White. However, only 2% self-identify as People of Color.
- Sixty-three percent of Jewish adults in Greater Kansas City identify politically as very liberal or liberal. Another 23% describe themselves as moderate, and the remaining 14% are very conservative or conservative.
- Two thirds of Jewish households in Greater Kansas City reside in Kansas and one third reside in Missouri.
- Twenty-six percent of Jewish households in Greater Kansas City reside within city limits of Kansas City, Kansas, or Kansas City, Missouri. Fifty-three percent reside in the suburbs of Overland Park, Leawood, or Prairie Village. The remaining 21% reside in other suburbs.
- Nearly half (48%) of Jewish adults in Greater Kansas City were raised in the area.
- Sixty-one percent of Jewish households in Greater Kansas City have resided in the area for 21 years or longer. Another 15% have resided in the area for 11-20 years. The remaining 23% arrived in the area fewer than 11 years ago.
- Eight percent of Jewish households in Greater Kansas City plan to move away in the next three years.

Patterns of Jewish Engagement

- The Index of Jewish Engagement focuses on Jewish behaviors—the ways in which individuals occupy and involve themselves in Jewish life in the Kansas City area—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 varying needs and interests.
- Five distinct patterns of behavior emerge from the data:
 - Cultural (35% of Jewish adults): Characterized by occasional participation in some aspects of Jewish life.
 - Personal (19% of Jewish adults): Characterized by high participation in activities that can be done alone or with close friends and family, typically outside the auspices of Jewish organizations.
 - Affiliated (17% of Jewish adults): Characterized by strong support for Jewish organizations but not necessarily frequent participation.
 - Connected (17% of Jewish adults): Characterized by high participation in home and ritual behaviors but less organizational participation than Affiliated or Immersed groups.
 - Immersed (13% of Jewish adults): Characterized by high participation in all aspects of Jewish life.

Figure ES.I. LCA groups



Jewish Children

- Among the 4,700 children living in Jewish households in Greater Kansas City, 3,600 (77% of all children) are being raised Jewish in some way, either by religion, secularly or culturally, or as Jewish and another religion.
- Among the children not being raised Jewish, 600 are being raised in no religion and 300 in another religion. The remaining children have parents who have not yet decided how to raise them or who did not provide enough information to determine how the children are being raised.
- Nearly all inmarried parents are raising their children Jewish. Among children of intermarried parents, about half are being raised Jewish in some way.
- Of Jewish children not yet in kindergarten, 22% were enrolled in a Jewish preschool program.
- Of Jewish children in grades K-12, 35% participated in at least one form of formal Jewish education, including day school, Hebrew school, congregational classes, private tutoring, or online programs.
- Of Jewish children in grades K-12, 33% had plans to participate in a Jewish camp in the summer of 2021 (assuming the COVID-19 pandemic did not alter their plans), including 24% who planned to attend a day camp and 13% who planned to attend an overnight camp.
- During the 2020-21 school year, 37% of Jewish children in grades 6-12 participated with a Jewish youth group or teen program.

- Twenty-seven percent of households with Jewish children attended at least one Jewish family program outside of school or preschool.
- The PJ Library and PJ Our Way programs sent Jewish books to 62% of eligible households in Greater Kansas City.

Financial Well-Being and Health Needs

- Fifteen percent of Jewish households are serving as primary caregivers for a relative, separate from routine childcare.
- A majority (58%) of caregivers are helping a parent or parent-in-law, but some are providing or managing care for a spouse (16%), a minor child with special needs (8%), or an adult child (7%). Twenty-one percent provide or manage care for another person.
- Twenty-six percent of Jewish households include at least one person who is limited in their work, school, or activities by some sort of health issue, special need, or disability.
- About one third of Jewish adults (34%) said they felt lonely sometimes, often, or all the time in the previous week.
- Emotional or mental health difficulties hurt the ability of 22% of Jewish adults to live their day-to-day lives sometimes, often, or all the time during the previous week.
- Half of Jewish adults reported being able to rely on no one (4%) or just a few people (48%).
- About half (54%) of Jewish adults experienced some job change or disruption in the past year, many as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Among them, 26% started working from home, 18% experienced reduced wages or hours, and 10% lost a job or were furloughed.
- Twenty-two percent of Jewish households described themselves as “well off,” 28% said they “have extra money,” and 27% said they “have enough money.” But 22% indicated they are “just managing to make ends meet,” and 1% said they “cannot make ends meet.”
- Nineteen percent of Jewish households have faced a substantial financial challenge within the past three years, including 16% who struggled to pay medical bills. Seven percent of households said they would not be able to cover a \$400 emergency expense.

Synagogues and Ritual Life

- Thirty-nine percent of Jewish households in Greater Kansas City belong to a synagogue, independent *minyan*, Chabad, or other Jewish worship community.
- Sixty-three percent of Jewish adults in Greater Kansas City attended services at least once in the past year, whether in person or online.
 - Nineteen percent attended once a month or more.
 - About half (49%) attended High Holiday services in 2020.
 - Forty-six percent ever attended online services.
- Seventy-nine percent of Jewish adults in Greater Kansas City lit Hanukkah candles in 2020.
- Sixty-four percent of Jewish adults in Greater Kansas City attended or hosted a Passover seder in 2021.
- Forty percent of Jewish adults in Greater Kansas City fasted on Yom Kippur in 2020. Another 15% could not fast for medical reasons.
- Nine percent of Jewish adults in Greater Kansas City keep kosher at home.

- In the past year, 55% of Jewish adults in Greater Kansas City ever lit Shabbat candles and 54% ever had a special meal for Shabbat.

Jewish Organizations and Informal Activities

- Twenty-seven percent of Jewish adults in Greater Kansas City belong to a local Jewish organization other than a synagogue or the JCC. Thirteen percent belong to informal Jewish groups.
- Fifty-seven percent of Jewish adults in Greater Kansas City attended at least one Jewish program in the past year. Educational and religious programs are most popular.
- Many Jewish adults in Greater Kansas City participated in Jewish activities online in the past year, including 53% who attended Jewish lifecycle events online, 42% who participated in online conversations about Jewish topics, and 41% who attended a Jewish program or class online.
- Many Jewish adults in Greater Kansas City participated in informal Jewish cultural activities in the past year, including talking about Jewish topics (93%), eating Jewish foods (89%), consuming Jewish culture (83%), reading Jewish publications (81%), and studying Jewish texts (43%).
- Twenty-five percent of Jewish adults in Greater Kansas City volunteered for Jewish organizations in the past year.
- Sixty-six percent of Jewish adults in Greater Kansas City donated to Jewish organizations in the past year, including 14% who donated to the Jewish Federation of Greater Kansas City.

Community, Connections, and Concerns

- Fifty-four percent of Jewish adults in Greater Kansas City feel a great deal of connection to the Jewish people, and another 33% feel some connection.
- Twenty percent of Jewish adults in Greater Kansas City feel a great deal of connection to the local Jewish community, and another 41% feel some connection.
- Ten percent of Jewish adults in Greater Kansas City feel a great deal of connection to an online Jewish community, and another 22% feel some connection.
- Twenty-six percent of Jewish adults in Greater Kansas City are very satisfied with their present level of participation in the local Jewish community, and another 46% are somewhat satisfied.
- The four most common barriers to participation cited by Jewish adults who are not very satisfied with their current level of participation in the Greater Kansas City Jewish community are a lack of interesting activities (30%), not knowing many people (23%), cost (21%), and the COVID-19 pandemic (20%).
- Two thirds (66%) of Jewish adults in Greater Kansas City said that half or more of their close friends are Jewish.
- Three quarters of Jewish adults in Greater Kansas City are very concerned about antisemitism in the United States (75%) and around the world (74%), but only 44% are very concerned about antisemitism in the Greater Kansas City area.
- Nine percent of Jewish adults in Greater Kansas City said they were victims of antisemitic incidents in the past year.

Connections to Israel

- Sixty percent of Jewish adults in Greater Kansas City have visited Israel at least once.
- Approximately two thirds of Jewish adults in Greater Kansas City feel somewhat (41%) or very (26%) attached to Israel.
- Approximately two thirds of Jewish adults in Greater Kansas City feel they have some (51%) or a lot (14%) in common with Jewish adults in Israel.
- Approximately two thirds of Jewish adults in Greater Kansas City follow news about Israel somewhat (44%) or very (20%) closely.

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

The 2021 Greater Kansas City 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 NORC at the University of Chicago and sponsored by the Jewish Federation of Greater Kansas City, employed innovative state-of-the-art methods to create a comprehensive portrait of the characteristics, attitudes, and behaviors of present-day Greater Kansas City. 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.¹ A new Pew study, *Jewish Americans in 2020* (2021), published as the survey for this study was beginning data collection, reinforced many of the findings of the original Pew study and contributed new insights into the state and character of the American Jewish community. With the Pew studies and the related national discourse as a backdrop, the Greater Kansas City 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 Greater Kansas City 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 Greater Kansas City Jewish Community Study provides a snapshot of the population and considers trends and developments that diverge from those of the past.

History

The present study is the third comprehensive population study of the Greater Kansas City Jewish community.² The first study, conducted in 1976, estimated approximately 19,600 Jews living in 7,400

households.³ The second study, conducted in 1985, estimated 19,100 Jews living in 8,900 households.⁴ These reports 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 2021 Greater Kansas City Jewish Community Study* is based on data collected through telephone and internet surveys from April 22 to July 15, 2021, from a total of 989 Jewish households residing for at least part of the year in the catchment area of the Jewish Federation of Greater Kansas City. The response rate for the primary sample was 10.1% (AAPOR RR3).

Households invited to participate in the survey were randomly selected from a combination of contact information provided by local Jewish community organizations, a sample devised from a model that predicts Jewish identification of households not on organizations' lists, and a residual address-based sample. 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 that are conducted by government agencies and other organizations and include information about religion. The synthesis combined data from hundreds of surveys and used information collected from Greater Kansas City residents to estimate the Jewish population in the region. See ajpp.brandeis.edu for more information about this approach to Jewish population estimates.

In all studies 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 their 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.)

Reading Report Tables

Numeric data in this report are most often presented in tables, although bar graphs and pie charts are used in some cases to illustrate or amplify selected data. To interpret tables correctly, the title and/or first row of each table will indicate the denominator for any reported numbers. Some tables report a percentage of Jewish households, some a percentage of Jewish adults, and some report on a subset for whom the questions are relevant.

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

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

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

A statistically significant difference between subgroups in a table or figure means that observed differences between groups are likely to reflect real, systematic differences between groups rather than apparent differences that only occur at random. Following the standard practice of social science research, this report relies on a standard of 5% or less chance of random error (i.e., $p \leq .05$), which means we are 95% certain that findings of differences between groups for a particular variable are not the product of chance, but rather a result of real differences between groups.

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.

Comparisons across Subgroups

In the majority of tables in this report, data are compared across a consistent set of subgroups that have been defined for purposes of this study. The structure of the table varies based on the content. This information is always provided in the first row of the table. The standard set of table categories is shown for the first time in this report in Table 3.7.

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

When there is a statistically significant difference among subgroups, we are 95% confident that at least some of the differences in estimates reflect actual differences and are not just the result of random chance. In the tables in this report, we designate these differences by shading them light gray. Findings that are not statistically significant are not shaded. Even in cases where there are statistically significant differences in a full set of responses, it is unlikely that there are statistically significant differences between every pair of numbers.

When there is a statistically significant difference among subgroups represented in a figure, we designate these differences by adding an asterisk (*) to the figure title. Thus, for example, the asterisk added to the end of the title for Figure 3.2 (page 34) indicates that there are significant differences between engagements groups regarding the extent to which being Jewish is a part of daily life. Where the differences between groups represented in a figure are not statistically significant, no asterisk will be added.

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 was not offered to each respondent, and because in some cases there were very few responses, it would be misleading to report the weighted proportion of responses to these questions. Instead, we may report the total number of responses that mentioned a particular code or theme. This number may appear in text or in parentheses after the response without a percent sign, or in tables labeled as "n" or number of responses. In many cases, sample quotes are also reported, with identifying information removed and edited for clarity.

Comparisons across Surveys

Although comparisons across surveys are informative, because of methodological differences, they are less precise and reliable than assessments of the data from the present study alone. Because the last comprehensive Jewish community study of Greater Kansas City was conducted over 35 years ago, in 1985, very few comparisons are made to assess change over time. However, in several places throughout the report, data from Pew's 2020 study, *Jewish Americans in 2020*, are used to show how the Greater Kansas City Jewish community is similar to or different from the United States Jewish community.

The Impact of COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic, which first became a subject of public concern in the United States in February and March of 2020, has had a profound impact on every aspect of social, communal, and economic life. The Jewish community was not spared these impacts of the pandemic. Individual lives were disrupted at the same time that organizations and institutions were forced to close, restructure, or refocus their activities and programs. CMJS/SSRI research on the impact of the pandemic conducted in 10 communities around the United States during the summer of 2020, suggests that there may have been a small decline in organizational memberships caused by the pandemic, but people who participated in Jewish programming in person before the pandemic tended to continue participating in programs online during the pandemic. This research also found that the financial impacts were experienced most severely by those who had financial difficulties prior to the pandemic, and that mental health was a particular concern among young adults.⁵

Data collection for this study took place between April 22 and July 15, 2021. Consequently, the findings included in this report should be interpreted in the context of the pandemic. To provide the Jewish community of Greater Kansas City with the most useful data possible, CMJS/SSRI modified some survey items to account for the impact of the pandemic. For example, many questions about participation in Jewish life included online participation or asked about what people do in a typical year rather than in the past year. As a result, on different measures, participation might have been lower, higher, or about the same as in typical years.

Nevertheless, we believe that the data reported here should serve as a new baseline from which to understand community engagement. We heard from some organizations that membership, enrollment, or program attendance was depressed because of the pandemic. As more members of the community are vaccinated and any remaining COVID-19 restrictions are lifted, we recommend that the community track their numbers to see if they are returning to pre-pandemic levels or if the community will need to adjust to a “new normal.”

Report Overview

This report presents key findings about the Greater Kansas City 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

The report begins with an overview of the demographic composition of the Greater Kansas City Jewish community, with a limited discussion of changes in the size of the Jewish population since the previous study in 1985.

Chapter 3. Patterns of Jewish Engagement

This chapter describes the multifaceted ways in which the Jews of Greater Kansas City 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 to members of the Greater Kansas City Jewish community.

Chapter 4. Jewish Children

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

Chapter 5. Financial Well-Being, Health and Special Needs

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

Chapter 6. Synagogue and Ritual Life

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

Chapter 7. Jewish Organizations and Informal Activities

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

Chapter 8. Community, Connections, and Concerns

This chapter explores the connections of Jewish adults in Greater Kansas City to the Jewish community, barriers that limit their participation in the Jewish community, and the context of their concern about antisemitism.

Chapter 9. Connections to Israel

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

Chapter 10. In the Words of Community Members

The penultimate chapter uses comments from survey respondents to summarize key findings of the study.

Chapter 11. Conclusions and Recommendations

The final chapter presents conclusions from the survey and recommendations for the future of the Greater Kansas City Jewish community.

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. Maps

Choropleth maps of key findings from the study

CHAPTER 2. DEMOGRAPHIC SNAPSHOT

Chapter Highlights

Understanding the character, behavior, and attitudes of the Greater Kansas City Jewish community requires knowledge of the size, geographic distribution, and basic socio-demographic features of the community. The ways in which Jewish households identify and engage with Judaism and the community vary significantly based upon who they are, where they live, their household composition, their ages, and their Jewish backgrounds. This chapter provides a demographic overview describing the size of the community and the basic characteristics of its members.

- The Greater Kansas City Jewish community numbers approximately 28,300 adults and children, of whom 22,100 are Jewish, living in 12,600 households. These households include:
 - 18,400 Jewish adults
 - 3,600 Jewish children
 - 5,200 non-Jewish adults
 - 1,100 non-Jewish children
- The mean age of Jewish adults in Greater Kansas City is 53, and the median is 60, somewhat older than the national median age of Jewish adults, 49. The mean age of all Jewish individuals in Greater Kansas City, including children, is 46, and the median age is 55.
- Twenty-two percent of Jewish households in Greater Kansas City include children under age 18.
- The individual intermarriage rate (i.e., the proportion of married Jewish adults with a non-Jewish spouse) is 41%, comparable to the national average.
- Forty-four percent of Jewish adults in Greater Kansas City identify as Reform, slightly higher than the national average of 37%. Greater Kansas City's proportions of Conservative Jews (18%) and Jews of no particular denomination (32%) are nearly identical to the national averages, but there are fewer Orthodox Jews (4%) and Jews who identify with other denominations (2%).
- Six percent of Jewish adults in Greater Kansas City identify as LGBTQ.
- Four percent of Jewish adults in Greater Kansas City grew up in Russian-speaking households.
- Four percent of Jewish adults in Greater Kansas City identify as Israeli citizens.
- Four percent of Jewish adults in Greater Kansas City identify as Hispanic or with any racial group other than White. However, only 2% self-identify as People of Color.
- Sixty-three percent of Jewish adults in Greater Kansas City identify politically as very liberal or liberal. Another 23% describe themselves as moderate, and the remaining 14% are very conservative or conservative.
- Two thirds of Jewish households in Greater Kansas City reside in Kansas and one third reside in Missouri.
- Twenty-six percent of Jewish households in Greater Kansas City reside within city limits of Kansas City, Kansas, or Kansas City, Missouri. Fifty-three percent reside in the suburbs of Overland Park, Leawood, or Prairie Village. The remaining 21% reside in other suburbs.

- Nearly half (48%) of Jewish adults in Greater Kansas City were raised in the area.
- Sixty-one percent of Jewish households in Greater Kansas City have resided in the area for 21 years or longer. Another 15% have resided in the area for 11-20 years. The remaining 23% arrived in the area fewer than 11 years ago.
- Eight percent of Jewish households in Greater Kansas City plan to move away in the next three years.

Jewish Population Estimate

The present community study estimates that there are approximately 12,600 Jewish households in Greater Kansas City (Table 2.1). These households include 28,300 individuals, of whom 22,100 are Jewish (see page 16 for definitions).

Jewish households comprise 1.5% of the total number of households in Greater Kansas City.⁶

Table 2.1. Greater Kansas City Jewish community population estimates, 2021 (rounded to nearest 100)

Total people in Jewish households	28,300
Total Jewish households	12,600
Total Jews	22,100
Adults (ages 18+)	
Jewish	18,400
Non-Jewish	5,200
Children (under age 18)	
Jewish	3,600
Non-Jewish or unknown religion	1,100

People in Jewish Households

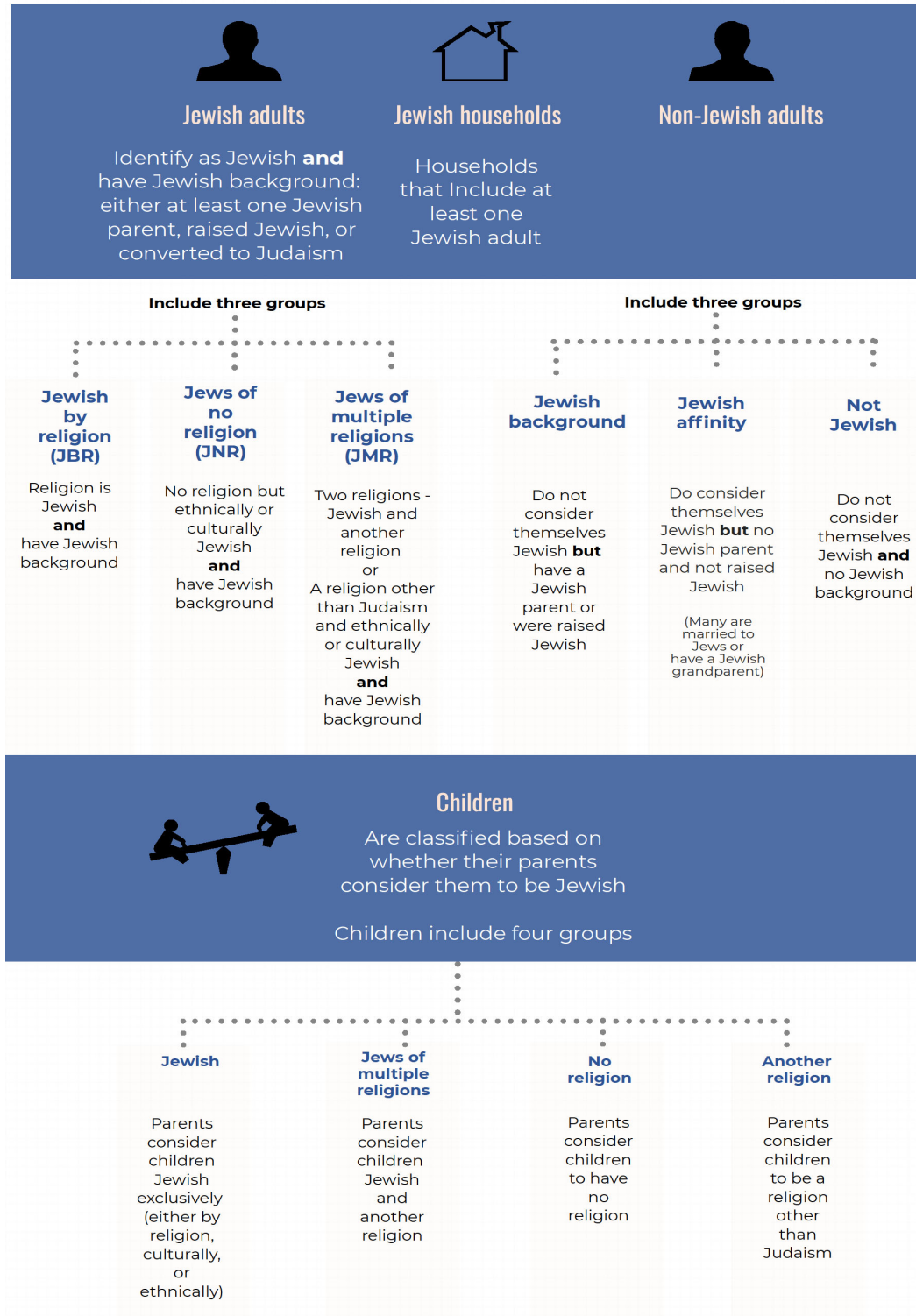
Estimates of the size of the Jewish population rest on a set of fundamental questions about who is Jewish for the purposes of the study. Recent surveys, such as the Pew Research Center’s 2013 and 2020 national studies of the US Jewish community, classify respondents according to their responses to a series of screening questions:

- What is your religion, if any?
- 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, Jewish adults have been categorized as “Jewish 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 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 Greater Kansas City’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).

Definitions: Who is a Jew?



Among Jewish adults in Greater Kansas City, 78% (14,400 individuals) identify as JBR (Table 2.2). This proportion is slightly larger than that of the overall United States Jewish population as reported by Pew (73%).⁷ Of the remaining Jewish adults, 16% identify as JNR (2,900 individuals), and 6% identify as JMR (1,100 individuals).

For more on children in Jewish households, see Chapter 4.

Table 2.2. Jewish population of Greater Kansas City, detail (rounded to nearest 100)

Jewish adults	18,400
JBR adults	14,400
JNR adults	2,900
JMR adults	1,100
Non-Jewish adults in Jewish households	5,200
Jewish children in Jewish households	3,600
Exclusively Jewish	3,100
Jewish and something else	500
Non-Jewish children in Jewish households	1,100
No religion	600
Exclusively another religion	300
Undetermined or parents undecided	100

Age and Gender Composition

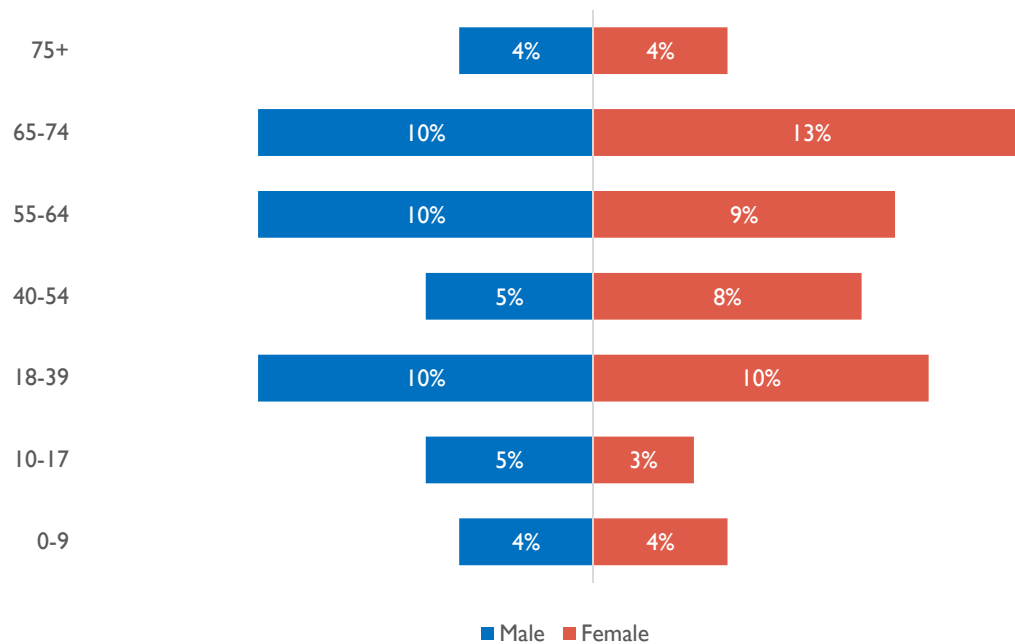
The Greater Kansas City Jewish community is older than the broader community in Greater Kansas City and the national Jewish community (Table 2.3). The mean age of Jewish adults in Greater Kansas City is 53, and the median is 60; in comparison, the national median age of Jewish adults is 49.⁸ Including children in the analysis lowers the ages. The mean age of all Jewish individuals in Greater Kansas City is 46, and the median age is 55.

Overall, the Greater Kansas City Jewish community is 47% male, 52% female, and 1% non-binary or another gender identity (Figure 2.1).

Table 2.3. Age of Jewish adults in Greater Kansas City compared to US Jews and all US adults

	Greater Kansas City Jewish adults (%)	Greater Kansas City all adults 2019 (ACS) (%)	US Jews 2020 (Pew) ⁹ (%)
Gen Z			
Age 18-24	8	11	11
Millennial/Gen X			
Age 25-34	10	19	17
Age 35-44	12	18	15
Age 45-54	10	16	13
Baby Boomers			
Age 55-64	23	17	14
Age 65-74	27	12	17
Greatest/Silent			
Age 75+	10	8	13
Total	100	100	100

Figure 2.1. Age-gender distribution of Jews in Greater Kansas City (note: excludes non-binary due to low numbers)

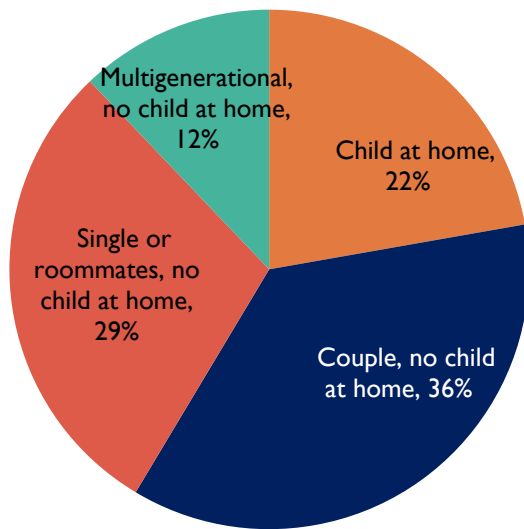


Household Composition

Households with children under age 18 (including single-parent, two-parent, or multigenerational households) make up 22% of Jewish households in Greater Kansas City (Figure 2.2). The mean household size is 2.2 individuals. Among households with children, the mean number of children ages 0-17 is 1.7.

Couples without children constitute 36% of households. Multigenerational households, defined as parents and adult children of any age living together, constitute 12% of households. This category can include adults, typically in their 70s or 80s, who have moved in with their adult children, or adults, typically in their 20s, 30s, or 40s, who live in their parents' homes. Twenty-nine percent of households include an adult living alone or with non-related roommates.

Figure 2.2. Household composition



Inmarriage and Inter marriage

Among all Jewish households in Greater Kansas City, 66% include a couple who is married, engaged, or partnered. Of these couples, 42% are inmarried and 58% are intermarried. Nine percent of married couples include someone who converted to Judaism.

Definitions: Inmarriage and Inter marriage

"Couples" and "marriages" include married and cohabiting couples. "Spouse" refers to marital spouses and partners.

Inmarried: two partners who are currently Jewish (JBR, JNR, JMR), regardless of whether they were born Jewish or converted

Intermarried: one partner currently Jewish and one partner not Jewish

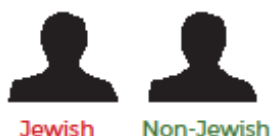
Household intermarriage rate percentage of couples that include a Jewish and non-Jewish partner

Individual intermarriage rate percentage of married/partnered Jewish adults with a partner who is not Jewish

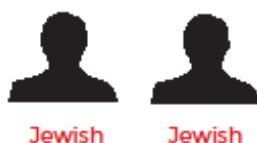
Understanding Intermarriage Rates

Example

Jewish household 1: Intermarried



Jewish household 2: Inmarried



Household intermarriage rate is 50%
because half of the couples (1 out of 2)
are intermarried



Individual intermarriage rate is 33%
because one of the three Jewish
individuals is intermarried

The individual intermarriage rate (i.e., the proportion of married Jewish adults with a non-Jewish spouse) is 41%, similar to the national average (42%).¹⁰ In general, the intermarriage rate is lower among older adults in the Greater Kansas City Jewish community (Table 2.4). Although young adults ages 18-39 have an individual intermarriage rate of 47%, the rate is likely artificially low because many of the people in this age group have not married yet. The rate is likely to increase to equal or exceed the rate among adults ages 40-54.

Table 2.4. Individual marital status by age (includes partners who live together)

	All Jewish adults (%)	Ages 18-39 (%)	Ages 40-54 (%)	Ages 55-64 (%)	Ages 65-74 (%)	Ages 75+ (%)
Married/partnered Jewish adults	73	62	81	86	79	71
Of married/partnered:						
Inmarried	59	53	48	58	66	69
Intermarried	41	47	52	42	34	31
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

Jewish Denominations

Denominational affiliation has historically been one of the primary indicators of Jewish identity and practice. A plurality of Jewish adults in Greater Kansas City, 44%, affiliate with the Reform movement, a little higher than the national average (Table 2.5). Greater Kansas City has a similar share of Conservative Jews and those who do not identify with a denomination as the United States as a whole. A smaller proportion of Jews in Greater Kansas City identify as Orthodox than is the norm across the United States.

As will be seen throughout the report, those who do not identify with any particular denomination tend to engage in fewer Jewish behaviors and be less connected to Jewish organizations than those who identify with a specific denomination. However, many of these individuals are deeply engaged in Jewish life in their own ways. Denomination is not as predictive of Jewish behavior or affiliation as it was in the past. (See Chapter 3 for a description of an Index of Jewish Engagement, which will be used throughout this report to describe demographic groups and other subgroups within the population based on their patterns of Jewish behavior.)

Table 2.5. Denomination of Jewish adults in Greater Kansas City and the United States

	GKC 2021 (%)	US Jews 2020 (%)
Orthodox	4	9
Conservative	18	17
Reform	44	37
Other	2	4
No denomination	32	32

Subpopulations

Eighty-nine percent of Jewish adults in Greater Kansas City identify as Ashkenazi (i.e., predominantly of Eastern or Central European Jewish descent; Table 2.6). Seven percent have a Sephardi heritage (i.e., descended from Spanish or Portuguese Jews), 1% are Mizrahi (i.e., descended from Middle Eastern Jewish cultures, such as Persian, Iraqi, or Yemenite), and 9% do not indicate a particular Jewish ancestry. (Totals do not add up to 100% because some respondents or their households identify with multiple categories.)

Table 2.6. Jewish ethnicity

	Jewish adults (%)	Jewish households (%)
Ashkenazi	89	91
Sephardi	7	7
Mizrachi	1	1
Other	< 1	< 1
None	9	11

Six percent of Jewish adults in Greater Kansas City identify as LGBTQ, and 13% of Jewish households include someone, Jewish or non-Jewish, who is LGBTQ (Table 2.7). Four percent of Jewish adults grew up in a Russian-speaking home, and 9% of households include someone who grew up in a Russian-speaking home. Four percent of Jewish adults are Israeli citizens, while 3% of Jewish households include an Israeli citizen.

Table 2.7. Demographic subgroups

	Jewish adults (%)	Jewish households (%)
LGBTQ	6	13
Grew up in Russian-speaking home	4	9
Israeli citizens	4	3

Ninety-six percent of Jewish individuals in Greater Kansas City identify solely as White and non-Hispanic (Table 2.8). However, although 4% of Jews identify with a racial identity other than White (i.e., Black or African American, Asian, American Indian or Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, or another race or origin) or as Hispanic, only 1% identify as a Person of Color. Five percent of Jewish households include at least one member, Jewish or non-Jewish, who identifies as White Hispanic, and 2% include someone who identifies with a racial identity other than White.

Table 2.8. Race and ethnicity

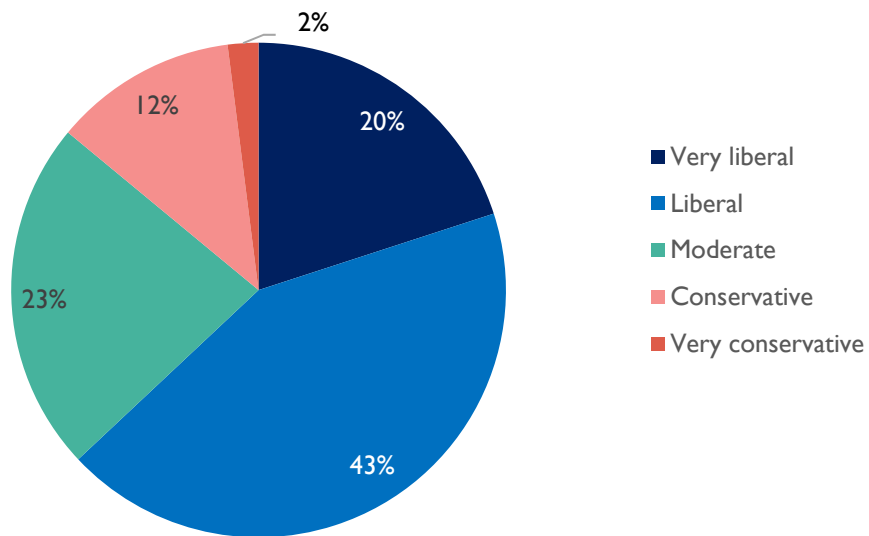
	All individuals in Jewish households (%)	Jewish individuals (%)	Jewish households (%)
Single race, non-Hispanic White	96	96	97
Single race, Hispanic White	2	3	5
Any non-White racial identity, including multiracial, non-Hispanic	2	1	2
Any non-White racial identity, including multiracial, Hispanic	< 1	< 1	< 1
Self-identifies as Person of Color	2	1	2

Note: The household column adds to more than 100% because households can contain individuals with different racial and ethnic identities.

Political Views

The majority of Jewish adults in Greater Kansas City report their political viewpoints as being very liberal (20%) or liberal (43%; Figure 2.3). About one quarter (23%) are moderate, 12% are conservative, and 2% are very conservative.

Figure 2.3. Political leanings of Jewish adults in Greater Kansas City



The Jewish community of Greater Kansas City can be divided by state or by regions based on ZIP code (Figure 2.4). A detailed breakdown of how respondents were classified into regions can be found in the methodological appendix (Appendix A).

Region

- City
- High Density Suburbs
- Other Suburbs

1 dot = 25 households

0 5 10 Miles

24

Table 2.9. Distribution of Jewish households, Jewish individuals, and all people across geographic regions.

	Jewish households (%)	Jewish individuals (%)	All people in Jewish households (%)
State			
Kansas	67	75	73
Missouri	33	25	27
Total	100	100	100
Region			
City	26	21	21
High-Density Suburbs	53	60	58
Other Suburbs	21	19	22
Total	100	100	100

There are also slight differences in geographic location by age. The age group with the largest share living in the City region is adults ages 18-39 (Table 2.10). More children ages 0-17 and adults ages 40-54 live in the Other Suburbs region than do other age groups.

Table 2.10. Age distribution of Jewish individuals by geographic regions

	All Jewish individuals (%)	Ages 0-17 (%)	Ages 18-39 (%)	Ages 40-54 (%)	Ages 55-64 (%)	Ages 65-74 (%)	Ages 75+ (%)
State							
Kansas	75	80	68	79	65	80	75
Missouri	25	20	32	21	35	20	25
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Region							
City	21	23	37	9	30	19	14
High-Density Suburbs	60	49	51	63	56	64	74
Other Suburbs	19	28	12	28	14	18	12
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Length of Residence and Mobility

Many Jewish adults in Greater Kansas City have longstanding ties to the area. Nearly half (48%) were raised in the area, including 31% who lived there for their entire lives (aside from college or graduate school). Another 49% were raised elsewhere in the United States, and 3% were raised abroad.

While 61% of Jewish adults have lived in Greater Kansas City for at least 21 years, 23% moved to the area within the past 10 years—including 7% who are originally from Greater Kansas City, moved away, and have now returned—and 15% have lived in the area for 11-20 years (Table 2.11).

Table 2.11. Length of residence

	All Jewish adults (%)
0-10 years	23
11-20 years	15
21+ years	61
Total	100

Half of adults younger than age 40 have lived in Greater Kansas City for 10 or fewer years (Table 2.12). The greatest share of newcomers live in the City region (Table 2.13).

Table 2.12. Age of Jewish adults by length of residence

	Ages 18-39 (%)	Ages 40-54 (%)	Ages 55-64 (%)	Ages 65-74 (%)	Ages 75+ (%)
0-10 years	50	27	8	7	4
11-20 years	15	30	8	11	9
20+ years	35	43	84	82	87
Total	100	100	100	100	100

Table 2.13. Geography of Jewish adults by length of residence

	Kansas (%)	Missouri (%)	City (%)	High-Density Suburbs (%)	Other Suburbs (%)
0-10 years	19	25	31	15	24
11-20 years	14	15	11	14	18
20+ years	67	60	58	70	58
Total	100	100	100	100	100

The most common reason for new residents to move to Greater Kansas City, cited by 63% of newcomers, was for a job or career (Table 2.14). Moving closer to family was a primary reason for relocation for 39% of recent arrivals, followed by seeking a lower cost of living (30%). (Note: Totals do not add up to 100% because respondents could cite as many reasons as they liked.)

Table 2.14. Primary reasons for moving to Greater Kansas City

	Jewish adults living in GKC for 0-10 years (%)
For job or career	63
To be close to family	39
Cost of living	30
Great place to raise a family	24
Quality of GKC community	23
Other	2

One-in-five Jewish households plan to move to a new home within the next three years. Of these, 42% plan to leave Greater Kansas City; this corresponds to 8% of all Jewish households.

CHAPTER 3. PATTERNS OF JEWISH ENGAGEMENT

Chapter Highlights

Just as the Greater Kansas City Jewish community is diverse demographically, so too does it represent 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 Greater Kansas City Jewish community.

In this chapter, we recommend that readers focus on the behaviors and attitudes typical of each engagement group. Later chapters and Appendix B will provide details regarding how these groups differ across various survey items. One difference between the groups, however, deserves mention here. Two of the engagement groups, representing 54% of Jewish adults in Greater Kansas City, have little involvement with Jewish organizations. Members of these groups may nevertheless participate in many Jewish activities on their own or with close friends and family. The remaining 46% of Jewish adults, the members of the other three engagement groups, are far more commonly present in Jewish communal spaces. This dynamic has significant effects on the Greater Kansas City Jewish community and is explored throughout this report.

- The Index focuses on Jewish behaviors—the ways in which individuals occupy and involve themselves in Jewish life in the Kansas City area—not on self-defined identities.
- Engagement groups include people of all ages and all denominational identities.
- The Index identifies opportunities to improve communal planning based on people’s varying needs and interests.
- Five distinct patterns of behavior emerge from the data:
 - Cultural (35% of Jewish adults): Characterized by occasional participation in some aspects of Jewish life.
 - Personal (19% of Jewish adults): Characterized by high participation in activities that can be done alone or with close friends and family, typically outside the auspices of Jewish organizations.
 - Affiliated (17% of Jewish adults): Characterized by strong support for Jewish organizations, but not necessarily frequent participation.
 - Connected (17% of Jewish adults): Characterized by high participation in home and ritual behaviors, but less organizational participation than Affiliated or Immersed groups.
 - Immersed (13% of Jewish adults): Characterized by high participation in all aspects of Jewish life.

Index of Jewish Engagement

One of the purposes of this Index is to demonstrate the full range of Jewish engagement. Throughout the remainder of this report, we present data about individual measures of Jewish engagement, such as synagogue membership and program participation. One subgroup of the population, such as young adults, may have high levels of participation in one type of Jewish behavior (e.g., lighting Shabbat candles) but lower participation in another (e.g., attending Jewish programs), and another subgroup, such as parents with children, may have the opposite pattern. By identifying the patterns that develop around measures of Jewish engagement, we can better understand the unique ways Jewish people express their Jewish identities and the potential constituencies that exist for different types of Jewish connections.

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

Background: Classifications of Jewish Engagement

The best-known system to categorize Jewish identity is denominational affiliation. In the past, Jewish denominational categories closely correlated with measures of Jewish engagement, including behaviors and attitudes. 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 particular denomination (32% of US Jews in 2020). Thus, denominational labels are limited in their ability to convey 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.¹¹ 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 holiday celebrations, ritual practices, organizational activities, and personal activities. The behavioral measures include:

- **Family holiday celebrations:** Family holiday celebrations, such as attending a Passover seder and lighting Hanukkah candles, 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 activities can be practiced at home without institutional affiliation.

- **Ritual practices:** Attending religious services, attending High Holiday services, keeping kosher, lighting Shabbat candles or having a Shabbat dinner.
- **Organizational activities:** Belonging to a synagogue, belonging to a Jewish organization or group, donating to Jewish causes, volunteering for Jewish organizations, attending Jewish programs.
- **Personal activities:** Reading Jewish organizations' material, engaging in cultural activities (book, music, TV, museum), eating traditional Jewish foods, studying or learning Jewish texts, following news about Israel.

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.

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.

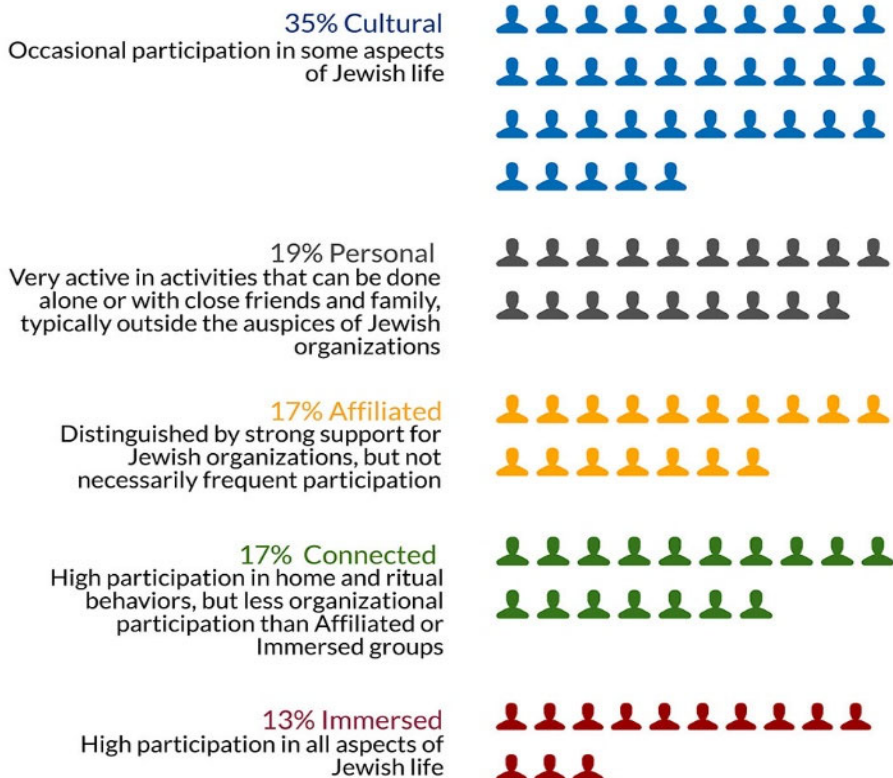
The LCA analysis presented here is unique to the Greater Kansas City Jewish community. Both the set of classifications and their names are derived directly from data collected for this study.

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 in Greater Kansas City 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, with the two largest groups, encompassing 54% of Jewish adults in Greater Kansas City, consisting of those who have little to no interaction with Jewish organizations.

Figure 3.1. LCA groups



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 greatest number of Jewish adults (35%) fall into the **“Cultural”** group. Although these individuals are mostly engaged in activities included in the model at lower rates than other groups, nearly two thirds of them ate Jewish foods or followed news about Israel. Another 19% of Jewish adults are in the **“Personal”** group. They have similar patterns of engagement to the Cultural group across a few categories, but include more Jewish adults who observe holidays with a familial component and practice rituals like marking Shabbat (69%). In contrast to both Cultural and Personal groups, the **“Immersed”** group (13%) is smaller but very active. At least half of Immersed adults practice nearly all the behaviors listed.

The remaining Jewish adult population is split evenly between the **“Affiliated”** group and the **“Connected”** group (17% each). Connected adults are moderately to heavily active across most activities. Adults in the Affiliated group are similar to Connected Jews in their participation in family holidays and related ritual practices, but those in the Affiliated group participate more in

organizational activities. Notably, they are more likely to have donated to Jewish charities in the past year (91%) than members of the Cultural and Personal groups.

Table 3.1. Jewish behaviors and engagement

	Cultural (%)	Personal (%)	Affiliated (%)	Connected (%)	Immersed (%)
All Jewish adults	35	19	17	17	13
Family holidays					
Attended seder, 2021	11	94	83	98	98
Lit Hanukkah candles, 2020	53	96	88	100	99
Ritual practices					
Shabbat candles/dinner past year, ever	11	69	75	97	100
---almost always or always	0	7	19	45	66
Attended services past year, monthly +	0	0	27	19	85
Attended High Holiday services, 2020	9	31	80	70	96
Keeps kosher any level	9	5	35	70	65
Organization behaviors (past year)					
Synagogue member	3	18	82	53	99
Member of other Jewish organization	16	6	42	36	83
Member of informal Jewish group	3	17	19	10	51
Participated in program, ever	24	49	70	83	99
---often	5	2	13	20	49
Volunteered for Jewish organization	3	7	36	36	82
Donated to Jewish charity	42	54	91	87	100
Individual behaviors (past year)					
Followed news about Israel, somewhat/very closely	64	53	50	94	88
Read Jewish publications, sometimes/frequently	33	81	41	100	96
Engaged with Jewish-focused culture, sometimes/frequently	38	77	27	100	90
Ate Jewish foods, sometimes/frequently	61	78	40	93	91
Studied or learned Jewish texts, sometimes/frequently	7	3	10	60	72

Legend	0-19 %	20-39%	40-59%	60-79%	80-100%
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Demographics and Jewish Engagement

The patterns of engagement are associated with respondents' demographic characteristics. 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 of the 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.

There are some age differences across the engagement groups (Table 3.2). For example, fewer Jews ages 18-39 are represented in the Cultural and Affiliated groups, and more Jews ages 75 and older are in the Connected group.

Table 3.2. Jewish engagement by age

	Age 18-39 (%)	Age 40-54 (%)	Age 55-64 (%)	Age 65-74 (%)	Age 75+ (%)	Total (%)
All Jewish adults	24	15	23	27	10	100
Engagement						
Cultural	17	18	31	24	10	100
Personal	24	16	32	20	7	100
Affiliated	17	28	27	20	8	100
Connected	27	12	19	28	15	100
Immersed	24	20	23	23	10	100

The geographic distribution by group is distinct from that of the Jewish population as a whole (Table 3.3). Although 55% of Jewish adults live in the High-Density Suburbs region, 47% of the Cultural group lives there. By contrast, while 18% of Jewish adults live in the Other Suburbs region, 25% of the Cultural group and 9% of the Immersed group live there.

Table 3.3. Jewish engagement by geography

	Kansas (%)	Missouri (%)	Total (%)	City (%)	High-Density Suburbs (%)	Other Suburbs (%)	Total (%)
All Jewish adults	69	31	100	27	55	18	100
Engagement							
Cultural	68	32	100	28	47	25	100
Personal	72	28	100	21	63	16	100
Affiliated	77	23	100	19	64	17	100
Connected	72	28	100	29	62	10	100
Immersed	73	27	100	25	67	9	100

More parents of minor children are represented in the Personal and Affiliated groups than the other groups (Table 3.4). Additionally, the Immersed group has the largest share of Jewish adults who are inmarried (66%). Jewish adults in the Personal group are the most likely to be married.

Table 3.4. Jewish engagement by household structure

	Parent of minor child (%)	Inmarried (%)	Intermarried (%)	Not married (%)	Total (%)
All Jewish adults	19	43	30	27	100
Engagement					
Cultural	21	24	49	27	100
Personal	26	50	37	13	100
Affiliated	25	55	25	20	100
Connected	15	57	19	24	100
Immersed	19	66	13	22	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).

Jewish denomination is related to Jewish engagement but is not identical (Table 3.5). About half of the Cultural and Personal engagement groups do not affiliate with a denomination (53%). The Immersed group contains a greater proportion of Orthodox Jews (15%) than any other group, but also includes contingents from every denominational grouping, including those who identify with no particular denomination (9%).

Table 3.5. Jewish engagement by denomination

	Orthodox (%)	Conservative (%)	Reform (%)	Other denom. (%)	No denom. (%)	Total (%)
All Jewish adults	4	18	44	2	32	100
Engagement						
Cultural	0	5	42	0	53	100
Personal	1	15	27	5	53	100
Affiliated	2	27	62	1	8	100
Connected	13	30	30	5	22	100
Immersed	15	39	32	5	9	100

An individual's Jewish parentage (Table 3.6) is associated with Jewish engagement in adulthood. Majorities of individuals in all groups were raised by two Jewish parents. However, those in the Cultural group are less likely to have had two Jewish parents (72%) than those in the other groups or among Jewish adults overall. The Immersed group has the most members with two Jewish parents (85%), but also has a substantial population with no Jewish parents (9%).

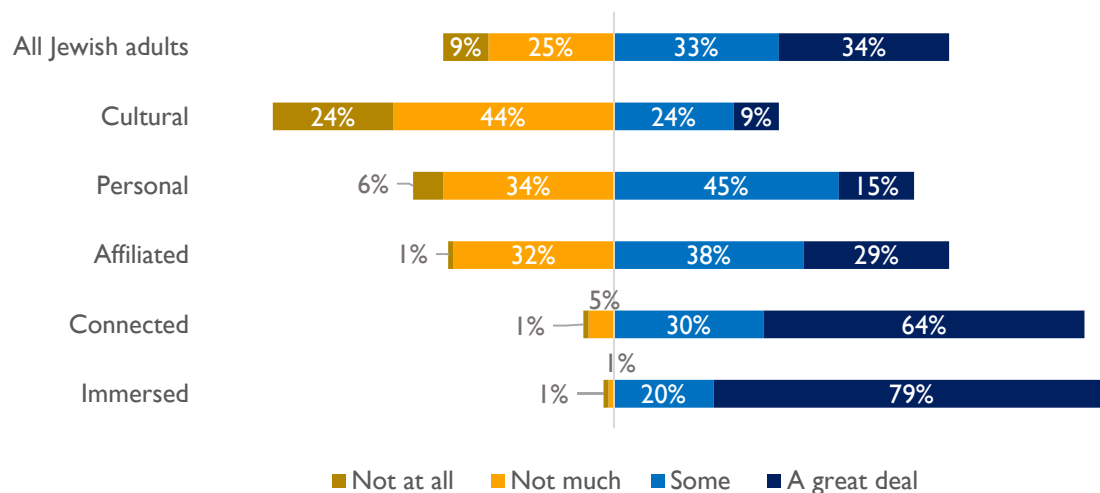
Table 3.6. Jewish engagement by Jewish parentage

	No Jewish parents (%)	One Jewish parent (%)	Both parents Jewish (%)	Total (%)
All Jewish adults	7	10	83	100
Engagement				
Cultural	5	24	72	100
Personal	9	13	78	100
Affiliated	14	5	81	100
Connected	10	11	79	100
Immersed	9	7	85	100

Attitudes about Being Jewish and Jewish Engagement

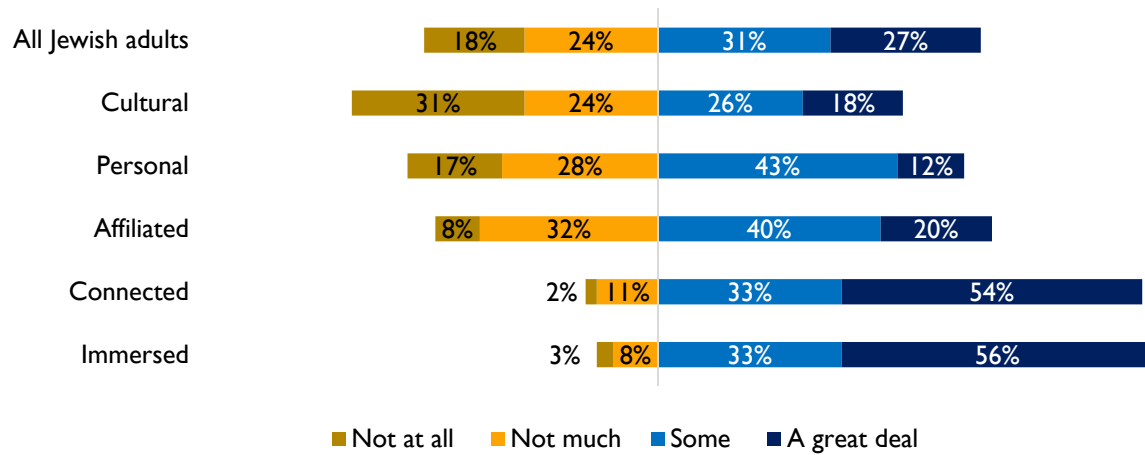
Just as Jewish behaviors vary across the engagement groups, so too do attitudes about being Jewish. The figures below show responses to a set of attitudinal questions that illustrate the differences among the groups. As Figure 3.2 illustrates, the majority in each group feels that being Jewish is part of their daily lives, but the extent to which that is the case varies between groups. Whereas among the Immersed group, 79% say being Jewish is “a great deal” part of their daily lives, just 9% in the Cultural group agree.

Figure 3.2. Being Jewish is part of daily life*



There is a similar pattern between groups in response to whether being Jewish helps with coping during a time of crisis (Figure 3.3). Nearly 90% of members of the Immersed and Connected groups feel that being Jewish helps them cope in a crisis at least some or a great deal, compared with just 44% of members of the Cultural group.

Figure 3.3. Being Jewish helps with coping during time of crisis*



Half of Jewish adults ages 18-39 feel that that being Jewish is “a great deal” part of their daily lives, far more than Jews of other ages (Table 3.7). Intermarried adults are less likely than inmarried and single Jews to say both that being Jewish is part of their daily lives and that being Jewish helps with coping with difficulties.

Table 3.7. Judaism as part of daily life and help in coping with difficulties by subpopulation, a great deal

	Part of daily life (%)	Helps with coping (%)
All Jewish adults	34	27
Age		
18-39	50	32
40-54	21	24
55-64	26	35
65-74	35	29
75+	34	27
State		
Kansas	36	28
Missouri	27	34
Region		
City	33	39
OP+L+PV	38	29
Other Suburbs	18	19
Marital status		
Inmarried	35	37
Intermarried	22	16
Not married	47	33
Parent		
No	36	33
Yes	26	19
Synagogue member		
No	23	24
Yes	50	39

Attitudes about Meaning of Judaism and Jewish Engagement

For certain elements of being Jewish, there is widespread agreement between the engagement groups (Figures 3.4, 3.5, and 3.6). At least 90% of every engagement group believes that working for justice and equality in society, leading an ethical and moral life, and remembering the Holocaust are important or essential to being Jewish.

Figure 3.4. Working for justice and equality in society

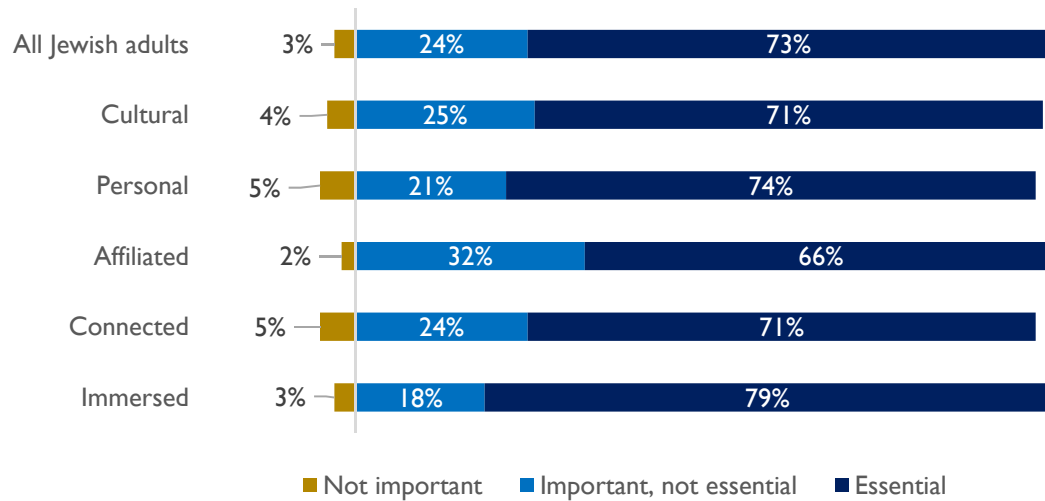


Figure 3.5. Leading an ethical and moral life

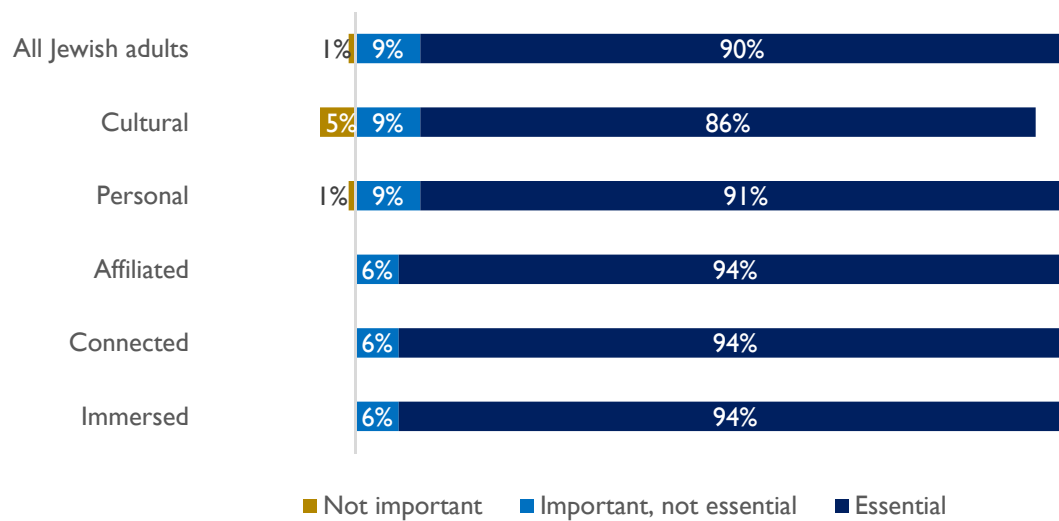
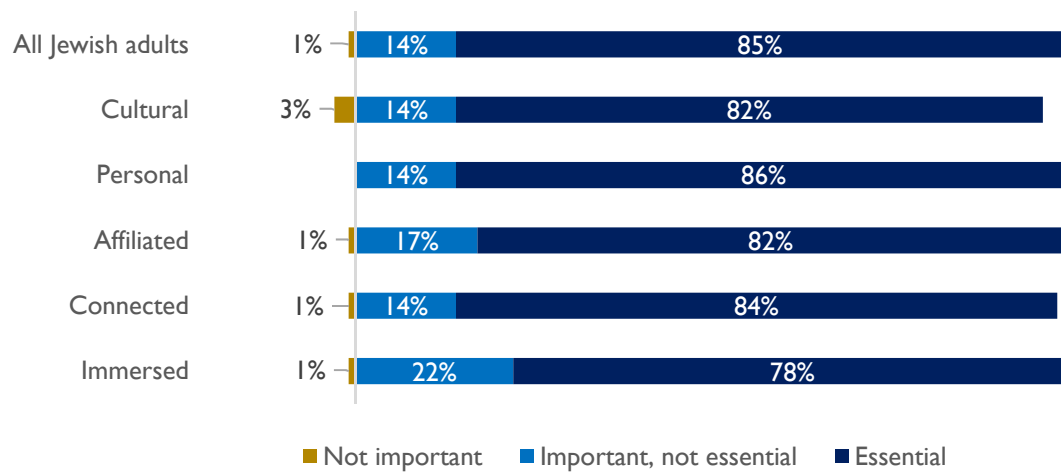


Figure 3.6. Remembering the Holocaust



By contrast, there is more disagreement about whether caring about Israel, observing Jewish law (*halakha*), and taking care of Jews in need is essential to being Jewish (Figures 3.7, 3.8, and 3.9). For example, 27% of Jewish adults in the Cultural group feel that caring about Israel is not important to being Jewish, compared to 7-12% of members of the other engagement groups. About one third (32%) of Jews in the Immersed group believes observing Jewish law is essential to being Jewish, but another 17% believe it is not important. While few Jewish adults believe that taking care of Jews in need is not important to being Jewish, 84% of adults in the Immersed group think it is essential, compared to 43% of the Personal group.

Figure 3.7. Caring about Israel*

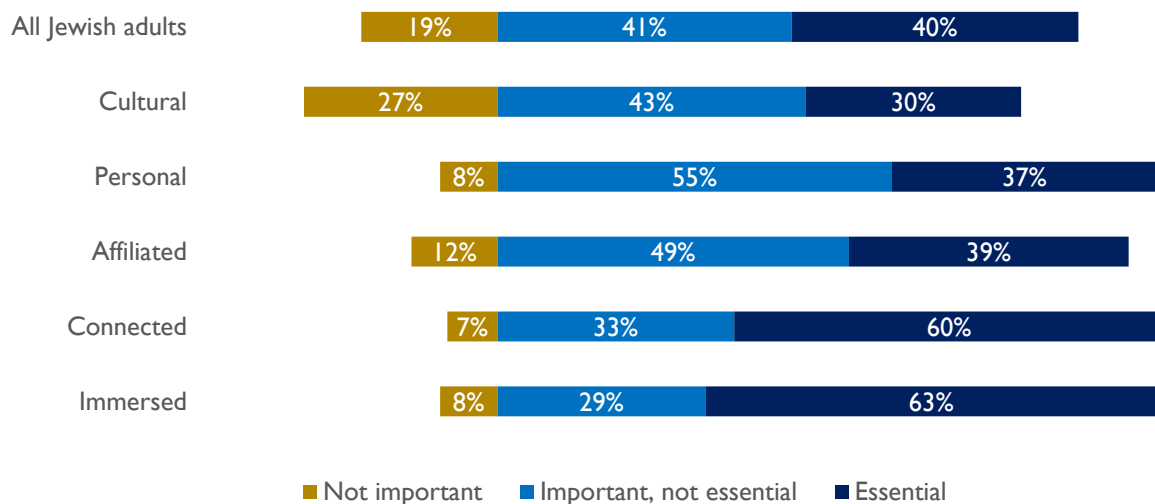


Figure 3.8. Observing Jewish law*

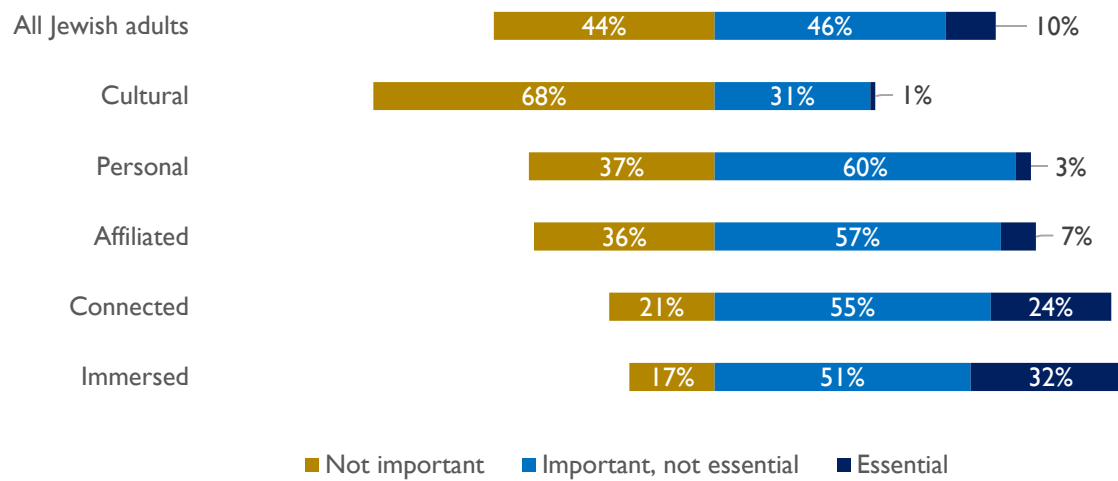
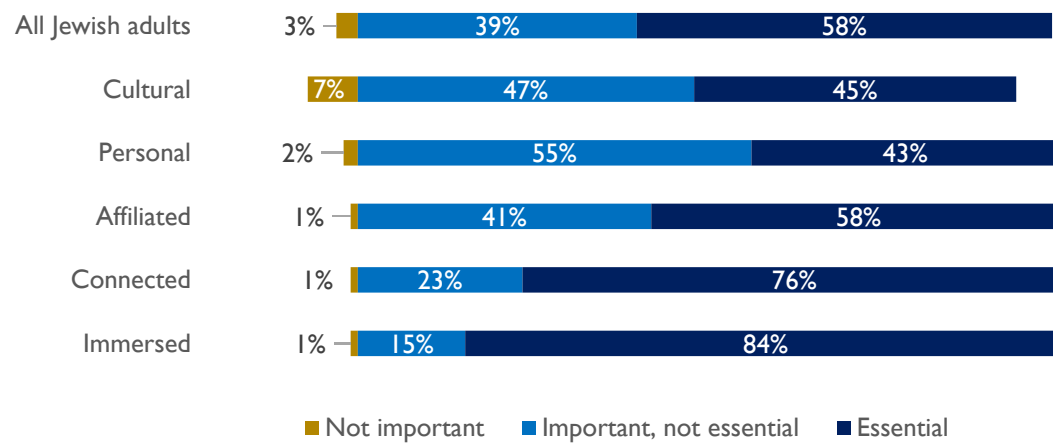


Figure 3.9. Taking care of Jews in need*



More than three quarters of Jewish adults ages 18-39 believe that taking care of Jews in need is essential to being Jewish, compared to 50-56% among older Jewish adults (Table 3.8).

Table 3.8. Essential to being Jewish by subpopulation

	Ethical and moral life (%)	Remembering the Holocaust (%)	Working for justice and equality (%)	Taking care of Jews in need (%)	Caring about Israel (%)	Observing Jewish law (%)
All Jewish adults	90	85	73	58	40	10
Age						
18-39	81	88	65	78	36	20
40-54	93	78	73	56	49	11
55-64	93	82	71	52	45	11
65-74	91	86	77	54	46	8
75+	85	73	64	50	41	10
State						
Kansas	88	85	69	60	50	15
Missouri	91	83	75	56	29	6
Region						
City	91	84	76	55	29	10
High-Density Suburbs	87	82	68	60	51	15
Other Suburbs	93	84	69	62	43	4
Marital status						
Inmarried	94	85	71	55	48	13
Intermarried	86	76	73	53	30	4
Not married	82	88	65	74	55	21
Parent						
No	88	82	74	60	45	14
Yes	91	86	71	54	40	4
Synagogue member						
No	87	86	72	51	39	9
Yes	92	83	75	71	52	17

CHAPTER 4. JEWISH CHILDREN

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 Greater Kansas City. 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 4,700 children living in Jewish households in Greater Kansas City, 3,600 (77% of all children) are being raised Jewish in some way, either by religion, secularly or culturally, or as Jewish and another religion.
- Among the children not being raised Jewish, 600 are being raised in no religion and 300 in another religion. The remaining children have parents who have not yet decided how to raise them or who did not provide enough information to determine how the children are being raised.
- Nearly all inmarried parents are raising their children Jewish. Among children of intermarried parents, about half are being raised Jewish in some way.
- Of Jewish children not yet in kindergarten, 22% were enrolled in a Jewish preschool program.
- Of Jewish children in grades K-12, 35% participated in at least one form of formal Jewish education, including day school, Hebrew school, congregational classes, private tutoring, or online programs.
- Of Jewish children in grades K-12, 33% had plans to participate in a Jewish camp in the summer of 2021 (assuming the COVID-19 pandemic did not alter their plans), including 24% who planned to attend a day camp and 13% who planned to attend an overnight camp.
- During the 2020-21 school year, 37% of Jewish children in grades 6-12 participated with a Jewish youth group or teen program.
- Twenty-seven percent of households with Jewish children attended at least one Jewish family program outside of school or preschool.
- The PJ Library and PJ Our Way programs sent Jewish books to 62% of eligible households in the Kansas City area.

Children in Jewish Households

Of the 4,700 children living in Jewish households in Greater Kansas City, there are 3,600 (77% of all children) who are Jewish in some way (Table 4.1). These children are considered by their parents to be Jewish alone (3,100, or 66% of all children) or Jewish and another religion (500, or 11% of all children).

The remaining 1,100 children who are not considered Jewish by their parents either have no religion (13% of all children), are being raised exclusively in another religion (6% of all children), or their

parents have not determined yet how they will be raised or did not provide enough information to assess their Jewish identities (2% of all children).

Table 4.1. Children in Jewish households

	Number	All children (%)
Jewish	3,600	77
Jewish alone	3,100	66
Jewish and another religion	500	11
Not Jewish	1,100	19
No religion	600	13
Another religion	300	6
Undetermined or parents undecided	100	2
Total	4,700	100

The ages of Jewish children skew older, with 39% of them being between the ages of 13-17 (Table 4.2).

Table 4.2. Ages of Jewish children

	All Jewish children (%)
0-5	25
5-12	31
13-17	39
Unknown	6
Total	100

Among all Jewish children, 52% of have inmarried parents, 40% have intermarried parents, and 8% have single parents.

Nearly all children of inmarried parents are Jewish: 95% of them are Jewish alone, and another 2% are Jewish and another religion (Figure 4.1). On the other hand, about half of children of intermarriage are Jewish: 35% are Jewish alone, and another 14% are Jewish and another religion (Figure 4.2). By contrast, nationally, 69% of the children of intermarried parents are being raised Jewish in some way.¹²

Figure 4.1. Children of inmarried parents

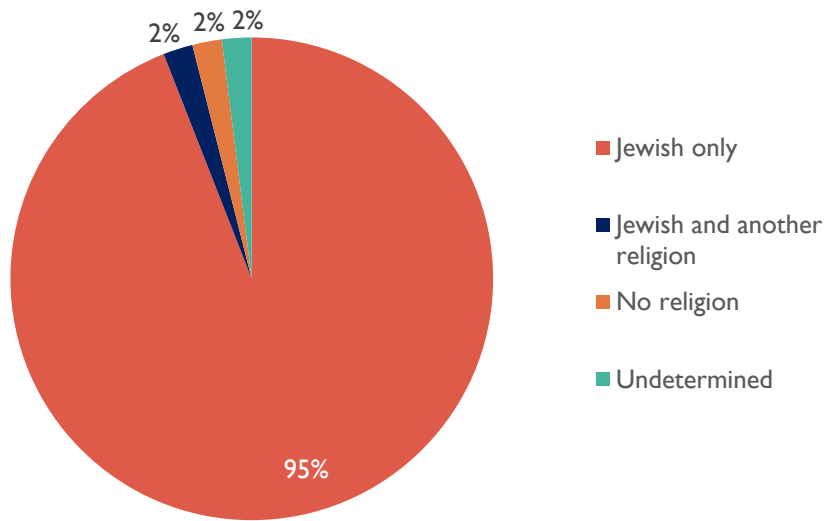
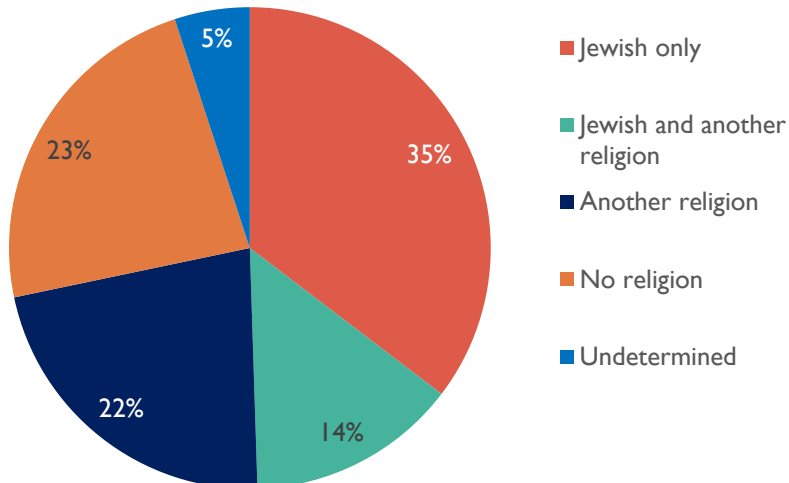


Figure 4.2. Children of intermarried parents



Jewish Schooling

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 4.3 shows the early childhood programs of Jewish children not yet in kindergarten during the 2020-21 school year. Jewish-run programs were attended by 22% of preschool-aged Jewish children.

Table 4.3. Enrollment in early childhood programs, 2020-21

	Age-eligible Jewish children (%)
Jewish program	22
Non-Jewish program or home setting	59
No program	19
Total	100

Unlike the tables and figures earlier in this chapter, which focused only on children who are not yet age 18, analysis of K-12 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 those children.

Of Jewish children in grades K-12 during the 2020-21 school year, 26% were enrolled in formal Jewish school (Table 4.4). Part-time school was attended by 16% of age-eligible Jewish children, and another 12% were enrolled in full-time day schools. Eleven percent of Jewish K-12 children were also enrolled in congregational classes aside from part-time school (e.g., confirmation classes), 9% took private classes or were tutored, and 9% participated in an online-only Jewish educational program. In total, 35% of K-12 Jewish children received some form of Jewish schooling during 2020-21.

Table 4.4. Enrollment in K-12 Jewish education, 2020-21

	Jewish children in K-12 (%)
Formal schooling	26
Part-time school	16
Full-time school	12
Other education programs	
Congregational classes	11
Private classes or tutoring	9
Online-only program	9
Any Jewish education	35

Jewish Camping and Informal Education

At the time of the study, 33% of Jewish children in grades K-12 were expected to attend a Jewish camp during the summer of 2021 (Table 4.5). This expected attendance was conditioned on the state of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 4.5. Planned enrollment in Jewish camps, summer 2021

	Jewish children in K-12 (%)
Any Jewish camp	33
Day camp	24
Overnight camp	13

Among the households that did not anticipate sending their children to Jewish camp, 14% reported being somewhat likely to send a child in the future, and 5% reported being very likely to do so.

During the 2020-21 school year, 37% of Jewish children in grades 6-12 participated in a Jewish youth group or teen program.

Two percent of Jewish children ages 12 and older have ever participated in an organized teen trip to Israel.

Thirty-two percent of age-eligible Jewish children have had a bar or bat mitzvah ceremony, and an additional 6% will have one in the future.

Children's Programs

In addition to formal and informal education, family program options outside of school or preschool included Tot Shabbat, synagogue-based playgroups, or family holiday programs. Twenty-seven percent of households attended at least one of these programs in the past six months, including 72% of synagogue-member households with children and 36% of households with children residing in Overland Park, Leawood, or Prairie Village. Six percent of Jewish households have attended online-only events, 2% went to in-person events, and 18% have gone to both types of events (not shown in table).

The PJ Library and PJ Our Way programs send Jewish books to households with at least one child age 12 or younger. Among eligible households, 62% received books.

CHAPTER 5. FINANCIAL WELL-BEING, HEALTH, AND SPECIAL NEEDS

Chapter Highlights

Jewish organizations in Greater Kansas City devote a significant share of their resources toward caring for families and individuals in need. The community's economic stability has provided sufficient means to provide for the needs of many. Nevertheless, it is clear that there are some unmet needs in the community.

Like the overall Jewish community in the United States, the Greater Kansas City Jewish community is highly educated and economically comfortable. Most households describe themselves as having enough money to meet their needs, including about half of households that say they “have a little extra” or are “well off.” Yet there is a significant number of households with unmet financial and health needs, including some whose needs preclude their participation in Jewish life.

- Fifteen percent of Jewish households are serving as primary caregivers for a relative, separate from routine childcare.
- A majority (58%) of caregivers are helping a parent or parent-in-law, but some are providing or managing care for a spouse (16%), a minor child with special needs (8%), or an adult child (7%). Twenty-one percent provide or manage care for someone else.
- Twenty-six percent of Jewish households include at least one person who is limited in their work, school, or activities by some sort of health issue, special need, or disability.
- Approximately one third of Jewish adults (34%) said that during the previous week they felt lonely sometimes, often, or all the time.
- Twenty-two percent of Jewish adults reported that during the previous week emotional or mental health difficulties hurt their ability to live their day-to-day lives sometimes, often, or all the time.
- Half of Jewish adults reported being able to rely on no one (4%) or just a few people (48%).
- About half (54%) of Jewish adults experienced some job change or disruption in the past year, many as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Among them, 26% started working from home, 18% experienced reduced wages or hours, and 10% lost a job or were furloughed.
- Twenty-two percent of Jewish households described themselves as well-off, 28% said they have extra money, and 27% said they have enough money. But 22% indicated they are just managing to make ends meet, and 1% said they cannot make ends meet.
- Nineteen percent of Jewish households have faced a substantial financial challenge within the past three years, including 16% who struggled to pay medical bills. Seven percent of households said they would not be able to cover a \$400 emergency expense.

Caregiving

Fifteen percent of Jewish households are serving as primary caregivers or managing care for a relative, separate from routine childcare (Table 5.1). Five percent personally provide the care, 5% manage the care, and another 5% do both.

Fifty-eight percent of caregivers are helping a parent or parent-in-law, but some are providing care for a spouse (16%) or a child, whether a minor (8%) or an adult age 18 and older (7%). Another 21% provide or manage care for someone else. (Note: The total adds up to more than 100% because of a small number of caregivers who provide or manage care for someone in more than one of these circumstances.)

Table 5.1. Caregivers

	Caregiver households (%)
All Jewish households	15
Jewish engagement	
Cultural	10
Personal	16
Affiliated	16
Connected	14
Immersed	15
Head of household age¹³	
18-39	11
40-54	14
55-64	21
65-74	13
75+	9
State	
Kansas	15
Missouri	14
Region	
City	15
High-Density Suburbs	13
Other Suburbs	20
Marital status	
Inmarried	11
Intermarried	16
Not married	15
Child in household	
No	14
Yes	15
Synagogue member	
No	15
Yes	13

Health Needs

Poor health, special needs, and disabilities can indicate the need for assistance from human service agencies. It can also be a hurdle for an individual's full, desired participation in Jewish life.

Twenty-six percent of Jewish households in Greater Kansas City include at least one person who is limited in their work, school, or activities by some sort of health issue, special need, or disability

(Table 5.2). A greater share of households in the Other Suburbs region have limiting health issues than do those in the City or High-Density Suburbs regions.

Table 5.2. Household health issues, disabilities, or special needs

	Households with a health issue, special need, or disability (%)
All Jewish households	26
Jewish engagement	
Cultural	32
Personal	16
Affiliated	17
Connected	29
Immersed	14
Head of household age	
18-39	19
40-54	23
55-64	25
65-74	22
75+	27
State	
Kansas	27
Missouri	23
Region	
City	23
High-Density Suburbs	18
Other Suburbs	39
Marital status	
Inmarried	19
Intermarried	23
Not married	26
Child in household	
No	26
Yes	24
Synagogue member	
No	29
Yes	21

In 95% of households that include someone with a significant health issue, one or more adults suffer from the health issue in question. In 19% of the households with a health issue, one or more minor children are coping with the condition (not shown in table).

The most common health limitation is chronic illness; this occurs in 62% of households with a health issue, representing 16% of all Jewish households (Table 5.3). Physical disabilities are faced by

14% of all Jewish households. Twelve percent of households include a member facing mental or emotional health problems.¹⁴

Table 5.3. Types of health issues

	Of households with a health issue (%)	All Jewish households (%)
Chronic illness	62	16
Physical disability	54	14
Mental or emotional health problems	47	12
Developmental or intellectual disability	11	3
Substance abuse/addiction	1	< 1
Dementia, including Alzheimer's disease	10	2
Complications related to COVID-19	< 1	< 1
Something else	12	3

Among the households that include someone with a health issue, 20% did not have all their service needs met; this corresponds to 5% of all Jewish households.

Older Adults

Among Jewish adults younger than age 75, 11% have a parent or close relative in an assisted living facility, nursing home, or independent senior living community that is located in Greater Kansas City. Another 6% percent have a parent or relative living in such a facility outside of Greater Kansas City.

Three percent of households in which all Jewish adults are ages 55 and older live in Village Shalom, and 3% live in another facility. Ten percent of adults ages 55 and older who are not currently living in a senior facility are considering moving to one within the next five years. If the analysis is limited to households where all members are ages 70 and older, 9% live in a senior community.

Among adults ages 56 and older, 4% do not have access to transportation when needed, and an additional 3% only have access some of the time.

In 11% of households that include at least one person ages 65 and older, someone typically needs help with a daily activity, such as doing household, preparing meals, or taking stairs.

Mental and Emotional Health

Data collection for this study began a little over a year after the COVID-19 crisis was declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization. Early research on the impact of the pandemic indicated that the combination of pervasive illness and periodic isolation and society-wide lockdowns required to help save lives wreaked havoc on the mental and emotional health of Americans.¹⁵

Approximately one third of Jewish adults (34%) in Greater Kansas City said they felt lonely sometimes, often, or all the time during the previous week (Table 5.4). Twenty-two percent of Jewish adults felt emotional or mental health difficulties hurt their ability to live their day-to-day lives sometimes, often, or all the time during the previous week. In terms of their local support networks, about half (51%) of Jewish adults reported being able to rely on no one (4%) or just a few people (48%).

More Jewish adults ages 18-39 felt lonely and felt impeded by emotional and mental health difficulties than did older adults despite often having more extensive social support networks; this trend is in line with other research conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic.¹⁶ Notably, Jewish adults residing in Missouri reported greater loneliness and more difficulties living their daily lives than those living in Kansas. Households that include children also reported greater emotional or mental difficulties that affect daily life than households without children, perhaps related to disruptions in schooling caused by the pandemic.

Table 5.4. Feeling lonely and emotional/mental health difficulties during past week

	Felt lonely last week: sometimes, often, all the time (%)	Emotional/mental difficulties hurt ability to live day-to-day life last week: sometimes, often, all the time (%)	Size of local support network: No one, just a few people (%)
All Jewish adults	34	22	51
Jewish engagement			
Cultural	31	29	56
Personal	35	26	52
Affiliated	13	7	34
Connected	27	23	50
Immersed	28	14	43
Age			
18-39	43	38	34
40-54	24	27	40
55-64	23	17	58
65-74	19	8	48
75+	20	12	62
State			
Kansas	21	15	45
Missouri	42	36	53
Region			
City	38	32	47
High-density suburbs	22	15	46
Other Suburbs	29	23	53
Marital status			
Inmarried	16	11	47
Intermarried	29	32	44
Not married	41	26	53
Parent			
No	33	18	50
Yes	38	33	38
Synagogue member			
No	34	24	51
Yes	23	15	42

Educational Attainment and Employment

The Jewish population of Greater Kansas City is highly educated. Of Jewish adults not enrolled in high school, 35% have earned a bachelor's degree, and another 50% have earned a graduate degree.¹⁷ Among Jews in the United States, 58% have a bachelor's degree or higher.¹⁸

Nearly two thirds of Jewish adults not in high school are working in at least one job, either full time (44%), part time (16%), or in multiple positions (5%; Table 5.5). Despite 7% of Jewish adults not working for pay, less than 1% were receiving unemployment benefits, suggesting that the majority of this group may be unemployed by choice, perhaps as stay-at-home parents or as full-time students. Another 26% of Jewish adults are retired.

Table 5.5. Employment status

Jewish adults not in high school (%)	
Full-time in one job or position	44
Part-time in one job or position	16
Multiple positions	5
Not working for pay	7
On temporary leave	2
Retired	26

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the employment situation of the majority of Jewish adults in Greater Kansas City (Table 5.6). Of all Jewish adults, 54% experienced some job change or disruption, including 26% of Jewish adults who started working from home. Eighteen percent of Jewish adults experienced reduced wages or hours, and 10% lost a job or were furloughed.

Table 5.6. Changes to employment since January 2020

Jewish adults not in high school (%)	
Any change	54
Lost job	10
Laid off	5
Closed business	3
Furloughed	2
Pay or hours cut	18
Hours reduced	13
Pay cut	12
Started working from home	26
Started new job	9
Hours increased	5
Stopped working	4
Something else	8

Financial Situation and Income

To assess financial well-being, the survey asked respondents to provide a subjective assessment of their household's financial situation. One percent of Jewish households said they cannot make ends meet, and another 22% stated they are just managing to make ends meet (Table 5.7). These two groups are combined for purposes of this report into a single category referred to as "struggling" and constitute 23% of Jewish households. About one quarter of households (27%) stated they have enough money, about one quarter (28%) said they have extra money, and 22% described themselves as well-off.

The financial situation of Jewish households varies by age, geography, and marital status (Table 5.8). More households ages 40-54 reported themselves as struggling (32%), compared to other households. More households in Kansas are well-off than those in Missouri, and more in the High-Density Suburbs are well-off than those in the City and Other Suburbs regions. Greater shares of single-person households are struggling than married households. Among the households not currently struggling, 11% reported that they did struggle at some point in the past three years (not shown in table).

Table 5.7. Financial situation

Report category	Response option	Jewish households (%)
Struggling	Cannot make ends meet	1
	Just managing to make ends meet	22
Enough	Have enough money	27
Extra	Have extra money	28
Well-off	Well-off	22

Table 5.8. Financial situation by subgroup

	Struggling (%)	Enough (%)	Extra (%)	Well-off (%)
All Jewish households	23	27	28	22
Jewish engagement				
Cultural	18	31	28	24
Personal	31	26	18	25
Affiliated	16	31	21	32
Connected	18	34	23	24
Immersed	18	32	28	22
Household age				
18-39	18	19	43	21
40-54	32	28	24	15
55-64	20	29	25	26
65-74	16	33	16	34
75+	13	52	12	23
State				
Kansas	19	30	21	30
Missouri	21	35	31	14
Region				
City	18	32	36	15
High-density suburbs	19	28	20	33
Other Suburbs	27	42	19	11
Marital status				
Inmarried	12	25	25	37
Intermarried	16	34	26	23
Not married	32	35	18	15
Child in household				
No	21	28	27	24
Yes	31	24	29	15
Synagogue member				
No	27	26	29	19
Yes	17	29	26	27

Twenty percent of Jewish households have income of less than \$50,000, and 12% of Jewish households make \$200,000 or more (Table 5.9). One quarter of households, however, declined to provide income information. Among those households that did not report their incomes, 6% are struggling, 43% have enough money, 20% have extra money, and 31% are well-off.

Table 5.9. Household income

	Less than \$50,000 (%)	Between \$50,000 - \$99,999 (%)	Between \$100,000 - \$149,999 (%)	Between \$150,000 - \$199,999 (%)	\$200,000 or more (%)	Prefer not to answer (%)
All Jewish households	20	24	15	4	12	25
Jewish engagement						
Cultural	21	23	9	3	20	25
Personal	21	22	10	5	12	29
Affiliated	14	14	19	15	19	19
Connected	23	19	13	3	16	25
Immersed	14	26	10	10	18	22
Household age						
18-39	23	28	19	6	12	12
40-54	14	22	17	6	21	19
55-64	13	18	8	12	20	27
65-74	18	20	11	3	18	30
75+	31	20	4	1	7	37
State						
Kansas	21	21	16	3	13	27
Missouri	23	30	13	6	11	20
Region						
City	18	28	12	8	12	22
High-density suburbs	16	16	11	6	22	28
Other Suburbs	26	27	16	4	9	18
Marital status						
Inmarried	5	20	13	8	33	22
Intermarried	12	16	14	9	18	30
Not married	39	28	8	1	3	21
Child in household						
No	22	21	11	4	13	28
Yes	7	20	14	13	31	16
Synagogue member						
No	19	23	11	3	18	26
Yes	16	19	13	12	16	23

The US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) determines the federal poverty level (FPL) annually, using a formula based on household income and household size.¹⁹ Using that

formula, 7% of Jewish households in the Kansas City area are below 100% FPL (Table 5.10). In all, 24% of households are below 250% FPL; of these, 21% are retirees (5% of all Jewish households).

Table 5.10. Federal poverty level

	Below 100% FPL (%)	100-149% FPL (%)	150-249% FPL (%)	Total below 250% FPL (%)
All Jewish households	7	8	10	24
Financial situation				
Struggling	12	27	21	59
Enough	4	2	12	18
Extra	5	0	4	10
Well-off	0	0	0	0

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, most Jewish households in Greater Kansas City are in about the same financial situation as they were in January 2020 (Table 5.11). However, 15% of households are doing worse financially, including nearly half (47%) of households classified as struggling.

Table 5.11. Change in financial situation by current financial situation

	Worse than before (%)	About the same (%)	Better than before (%)
All Jewish households	15	64	21
Financial situation			
Struggling	47	41	12
Enough	10	73	17
Extra	5	68	27
Well-off	3	55	42

Financial Vulnerability

The most common financial hardship faced by Jewish households in Greater Kansas City is the inability to pay for medical care or medicine. Nine percent of households were unable to pay for medical care or medicine sometime in the past year, and an additional 7% of households encountered this situation from one to three years ago (Table 5.12). Seven percent of households could not pay a utility bill in full within the past year, 5% could not afford a rent or mortgage payment, and 3% could not afford to buy all the food they needed.

Table 5.12. Type of household hardship

Difficulty paying for...	In past year (%)	Between 1-3 years ago (%)	Not within past three years (%)
Medical care or medicine	9	7	84
A utility bill	7	3	90
Rent or mortgage	5	3	91
Needed food	3	5	93

In total, 19% of Jewish households faced a financial difficulty within the past three years (Table 5.13). Households headed by older adults were less likely than households headed by younger adults to have faced economic hardship in the recent past.

Another benchmark that is commonly used to assess financial vulnerability is the ability to cover emergency expenses. Seven percent of Jewish households said they are unable to pay in full an unexpected \$400 emergency expense with cash, money currently in a bank account, or a credit card.²⁰ Households with a married couple were more likely to be able to pay off a \$400 emergency expense than households with single adults.

Table 5.13. Economic insecurity

	Economic hardship in past three years (%)	Unable to pay an unexpected \$400 emergency expense (%)
All Jewish households	19	7
Jewish engagement		
Cultural	15	9
Personal	26	1
Affiliated	10	7
Connected	16	6
Immersed	12	6
Household age		
18-39	23	8
40-54	30	10
55-64	16	11
65-74	8	3
75+	7	3
State		
Kansas	14	6
Missouri	21	9
Region		
City	18	8
High-density suburbs	13	6
Other Suburbs	27	9
Marital status		
Inmarried	9	3
Intermarried	15	6
Not married	25	12
Child in household		
No	15	7
Yes	22	7
Synagogue member		
No	22	7
Yes	14	8

Many Jewish adults in Greater Kansas City expressed concerns about their future financial needs (Table 5.14). Thirteen percent of adults older than age 40 are not at all confident that they will be able to afford their retirement, and 9% are not too confident. Seventeen percent of all Jewish adults are not at all (9%) or not too (8%) confident that they will be able to keep their current savings and investments, and 10% are not at all confident (3%) or not too confident (7%) that they will be able to afford healthcare in the future. Among Jewish adults ages 40 or younger, 4% are not at all confident and 13% are not too confident that they will be able to afford to pay off their student loans.

Table 5.14. Confidence in financial future

	Not at all confident (%)	Not too confident (%)	Somewhat confident (%)	Very confident (%)	Does not apply (%)
Enough money for retirement (age > 40)	13	9	35	42	2
Keep current savings/investments	9	8	32	49	1
Pay student loans (age < 41)	4	13	6	37	41
Afford healthcare	3	7	24	65	1
Afford basic living expenses	< 1	3	20	75	2

Lack of confidence in one's financial future varies by age and marital status (Table 5.15). About one third of adults ages 40-54 are not at all or not too confident that they will have enough money for retirement, compared to 22% of adults ages 55-64, who are closer to retirement age. Even so, about one-in-ten Jewish adults ages 65 and older are not at all or not too confident they will have enough financial resources to last through their retirement.

Table 5.15. Not at all or not too confident in financial future

	Enough money for retirement (age > 40) (%)	Keep current savings/investments (%)	Pay student loans (age < 41) (%)	Afford healthcare (%)	Afford basic living expenses (%)
All Jewish adults	21	17	16	10	3
Engagement group					
Cultural	18	13	--	8	3
Personal	26	17	--	6	0
Affiliated	17	10	--	2	2
Connected	21	23	--	13	5
Immersed	16	12	--	4	3
Age					
18-39	n/a	9	n/a	5	1
40-54	34	26	n/a	14	1
55-64	22	17	n/a	14	3
65-74	10	10	n/a	2	2
75+	11	11	n/a	6	6
State					
Kansas	18	17	15	7	3
Missouri	24	17	--	11	1
Region					
City	20	13	--	8	<1
High-density suburbs	19	14	8	11	3
Other Suburbs	24	17	--	9	4
Marital status					
Inmarried	14	10	< 1	6	2
Intermarried	21	18	--	14	3
Not married	33	20	--	6	3
Parent					
No	19	14	--	7	3
Yes	26	18	15	7	2
Synagogue member					
No	23	18	--	10	2
Yes	19	16	11	10	4

Impact of Finances on Jewish Life

Approximately one quarter of Jewish households had to limit or change their involvement in Jewish life due to their financial situation (Table 5.16). In the year prior to the survey, 17% of Jewish households were unable to contribute as much to Jewish causes as they had in the past, and 8% reduced their participation in Jewish activities. More parents than non-parents had to make a change

to their Jewish participation (Table 5.17). Twenty-seven percent of synagogue-member households changed their involvement in Jewish life, as did 15% of non-synagogue-member households.

Table 5.16. Limitations or changes to Jewish life caused by finances

	Jewish households (%)
Any change	24
Unable to donate as much as would like	17
Unable to participate in Jewish activities	8
Did not enroll children in Jewish education (parents)	4
Discontinued synagogue membership	4
Required financial assistance for Jewish education (parents)	2
Required financial assistance to maintain synagogue membership	< 1
Something else	4

Table 5.17. Limitations or changes to Jewish life caused by finances, by subgroup

Any financial limit to Jewish life (%)	
All Jewish adults	24
Jewish engagement	
Cultural	11
Personal	23
Affiliated	20
Connected	27
Immersed	29
Age	
18-39	21
40-54	29
55-64	16
65-74	15
75+	18
State	
Kansas	26
Missouri	18
Region	
City	12
High-density suburbs	20
Other Suburbs	29
Marital status	
Inmarried	18
Intermarried	14
Not married	28
Parent	
No	17
Yes	31
Synagogue member	
No	15
Yes	27

CHAPTER 6. SYNAGOGUES AND RITUAL LIFE

Chapter Highlights

Synagogues have long been the central communal and religious “home” for Jews in the United States, and membership in a congregation is one of the key ways Jews affiliate with the Jewish community. However, regardless of membership status, many Jews participate in ritual on a regular or intermittent basis at home. Religious and ritual observance constitute one means by which Jews in Greater Kansas City express their Jewish identities.

- Thirty-nine percent of Jewish households in Greater Kansas City belong to a synagogue, independent *minyan*, Chabad, or other Jewish worship community.
- Sixty-three percent of Jewish adults in Greater Kansas City attended services at least once in the past year, whether in person or online.
 - Nineteen percent attended once a month or more.
 - About half (49%) attended High Holiday services in 2020.
 - Forty-six percent attended online services at least once.
- Seventy-nine percent of Jewish adults in Greater Kansas City lit Hanukkah candles in 2020.
- Sixty-four percent of Jewish adults in Greater Kansas City attended or hosted a Passover seder in 2021.
- Forty percent of Jewish adults in Greater Kansas City fasted on Yom Kippur in 2020. Another 15% could not fast for medical reasons.
- Nine percent of Jewish adults in Greater Kansas City keep kosher at home.
- In the past year, 55% of Jewish adults in Greater Kansas City lit Shabbat candles at least once, and 54% had a special meal for Shabbat at least once.

Synagogue Membership

In Greater Kansas City, 39% of households include someone who belongs to a Jewish congregation, whether a synagogue, independent *minyan*, Chabad, or other worship community (Table 6.1). Nationally, 35% of households include a member of a Jewish congregation.²¹

In addition to current members, 31% of Jewish adults were formerly members of a congregation at some point in their adult lives (not shown in table).

Thirty-four percent of households are members of a congregation in Greater Kansas City, with the remaining 5% of members belonging to congregations outside the area. Three percent of Kansas City Jewish households belong to more than one congregation in the area (not shown in table). About one quarter (23%) of Jewish households pay dues to a “brick-and-mortar” synagogue located in Greater Kansas City (see definitions, below).

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.

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.

Rates of synagogue membership are highest within the Immersed engagement group. Geographically, synagogue membership is lowest in the Other Suburbs region, and highest in the High-Density Suburbs region.

Table 6.1. Membership in Jewish congregations, Jewish households

	Member of any congregation (%)	Member of a congregation in Greater Kansas City (%)
All Jewish households	39	34
Engagement group		
Cultural	5	4
Personal	19	16
Affiliated	82	68
Connected	49	44
Immersed	100	88
Household age		
18-39	39	35
40-54	40	30
55-64	35	31
65-74	35	31
75+	40	35
State		
Kansas	41	34
Missouri	35	33
Region		
City	35	32
High-Density Suburbs	41	36
Other Suburbs	27	20
Marital status		
Inmarried	54	49
Intermarried	23	18
Not married	41	33
Child in household		
No	40	33
Yes	36	36

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* have grown in popularity, and voluntary contributions have replaced dues in some congregations.

As noted in Table 6.2, 23% of all Jewish households pay dues to a brick-and-mortar congregation, representing 59% of member households. Six percent of all households belong to a brick-and-mortar congregation but do not pay dues, representing 16% of member households. The 5% of all households that belong to Chabad represent 13% of member households, and the 5% of households that belong to a congregation outside of Greater Kansas City represent 14% of member households. Notably, although fewer Jewish adults ages 18-39 pay dues to a brick-and-mortar congregation, more belong to a local Chabad than any other age group.

Table 6.2. Synagogue membership by type

	Pays dues, brick-and-mortar (%)	No dues, brick-and-mortar (%)	Chabad (%)	Outside of GKC (%)
All Jewish households	23	6	5	5
Engagement group				
Cultural	3	1	0	1
Personal	10	3	3	3
Affiliated	55	7	5	14
Connected	28	8	11	5
Immersed	64	19	11	12
Household age				
18-39	13	9	13	4
40-54	21	8	1	11
55-64	27	2	2	4
65-74	25	5	3	4
75+	28	5	< 1	4
State				
Kansas	25	5	4	5
Missouri	17	6	5	6
Region				
City	18	8	7	3
High-Density Suburbs	28	4	4	5
Other Suburbs	14	3	2	3
Marital status				
Inmarried	39	4	6	4
Intermarried	12	4	2	5
Not married	22	8	5	7
Child in household				
No	24	4	3	6
Yes	19	8	8	3

Among households that pay dues to a brick-and-mortar synagogue, 57% belong to a Reform congregation, 29% to a Conservative congregation, 9% to a Traditional congregation, and 4% to an Orthodox congregation (Table 6.3).

Table 6.3. Congregational affiliation of households paying dues to brick-and-mortar synagogues

	Dues paying brick-and-mortar member households (%)
Orthodox	4
Conservative	29
Reform	57
Traditional	9
Unaffiliated	5

Note: Numbers do not sum to 100 because some households belong to more than one synagogue.

Religious Services

Jews in Greater Kansas City participate in synagogue life in ways beyond membership. Although 39% of households belong to a congregation, 63% attended a Jewish religious service at least once in the past year, either in person or online (Table 6.4). Among the 63% who ever attended a service, 19% did so at least once a month. The Immersed engagement group had the largest share of members attending services overall and attending monthly or more. Adults ages 18-39 were most likely to attend services at least once, but there were no differences by age for going to services on a monthly basis.

About half of Jewish adults (49%) attended a High Holiday service in 2020, whether in-person or online.

Table 6.4. Jewish religious services in past year, online or in-person

	Ever attend (%)	Attended monthly or more (%)	High Holiday service, 2020 (%)
All Jewish adults	63	19	49
Engagement group			
Cultural	25	0	9
Personal	47	0	31
Affiliated	89	27	80
Connected	88	19	70
Immersed	96	85	96
Age			
18-39	78	15	51
40-54	69	22	57
55-64	49	14	40
65-74	54	19	40
75+	60	20	49
State			
Kansas	64	17	49
Missouri	54	21	38
Region			
City	55	20	41
High-Density Suburbs	65	20	50
Other Suburbs	58	13	40
Marital status			
Inmarried	66	23	57
Intermarried	46	11	28
Not married	73	19	49
Parent			
No	62	19	48
Yes	64	14	52
Synagogue member			
No	43	3	24
Yes	90	42	80

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many congregations in Greater Kansas City (and nationally) stream religious services online.²² Overall, 46% of Jewish adults reported participating in an online Jewish service at least once over the past year (Table 6.5). Among them, 9% did so often.

Table 6.5. Online Jewish services participation, past year

Ever participated in online Jewish services (%)	
All Jewish adults	46
Engagement group	
Cultural	17
Personal	32
Affiliated	67
Connected	72
Immersed	90
Age	
18-39	41
40-54	47
55-64	49
65-74	45
75+	61
State	
Kansas	49
Missouri	40
Region	
City	44
High-Density Suburbs	47
Other Suburbs	49
Marital status	
Inmarried	55
Intermarried	34
Not married	47
Parent	
No	50
Yes	35
Synagogue member	
No	30
Yes	72

Holidays and Rituals

The majority of Jewish adults in Greater Kansas City celebrate Jewish holidays and observe Jewish rituals. More than three quarters of adults (79%) lit Hanukkah candles in 2020, and about two thirds hosted or attended a Passover seder in 2021 (Table 6.6). Lighting Hanukkah candles is nearly universal except for those in the Cultural engagement group. On Yom Kippur 2020, 40% of Jewish adults fasted, and another 15% did not fast for medical reasons. Nine percent of adults keep kosher at home or all the time, compared to 17% of the Jewish community in the United States.

Table 6.6. Ritual practice

	Lit Hanukkah candles, 2020 (%)	Attended Passover seder, 2021 (%)	Fasted on Yom Kippur, 2020 (%)*	Keep kosher at home (%)
All Jewish adults	79	64	40	9
Engagement group				
Cultural	53	11	9	1
Personal	96	94	38	0
Affiliated	88	83	58	10
Connected	100	89	68	23
Immersed	99	98	77	38
Age				
18-39	95	70	40	20
40-54	79	60	44	14
55-64	87	62	41	10
65-74	81	63	42	10
75+	65	65	38	10
State				
Kansas	78	67	44	15
Missouri	82	55	33	8
Region				
City	87	61	34	4
High-Density Suburbs	84	70	45	16
Other Suburbs	69	44	39	15
Marital status				
Inmarried	94	81	54	15
Intermarried	72	50	26	5
Not married	74	50	37	21
Parent				
No	77	61	42	14
Yes	91	73	37	8
Synagogue member				
No	75	48	27	7
Yes	93	87	63	22

*Among the 60% who did *not* fast, 15% could not fast for medical reasons.

Fifty-five percent of Jewish adults lit Shabbat candles at least once in the past year, including 20% who did so always or almost always (Table 6.7). Fifty-four percent prepared or attended a special meal for Shabbat at least once in the past year, including 12% who did so always or almost always.

Table 6.7. Shabbat ritual practice in past year

	Lit Shabbat candles		Special meal	
	Ever (%)	Always or almost always (%)	Ever (%)	Always or almost always (%)
All Jewish adults	55	20	54	12
Engagement group				
Cultural	5	0	9	0
Personal	59	5	58	3
Affiliated	63	19	59	8
Connected	92	45	82	31
Immersed	99	58	99	54
Age				
18-39	63	21	74	20
40-54	55	19	49	13
55-64	42	15	39	11
65-74	51	19	53	10
75+	61	19	54	13
State				
Kansas	55	21	54	15
Missouri	55	13	50	9
Region				
City	57	18	52	14
High-Density Suburbs	54	20	57	15
Other Suburbs	40	15	39	8
Marital status				
Inmarried	71	29	67	21
Intermarried	29	5	29	4
Not married	49	18	59	12
Parent				
No	51	20	53	12
Yes	58	16	54	12
Synagogue member				
No	35	7	39	3
Yes	79	37	75	29

CHAPTER 7. JEWISH ORGANIZATIONS AND INFORMAL ACTIVITIES

Chapter Highlights

The Greater Kansas City Jewish community offers numerous opportunities for communal participation. Jews join local, regional, and national membership organizations and attend a diverse array of cultural, educational, and religious events. They volunteer their time and donate 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.

This chapter describes the multiple ways in which Jews in Greater Kansas City interact and participate with their local peers and institutions and illustrates measures that may enhance these connections. Some of the main findings include:

- Twenty-seven percent of Jewish adults in Greater Kansas City belong to a local Jewish organization other than a synagogue or the JCC. Thirteen percent belong to informal Jewish groups.
- Fifty-seven percent of Jewish adults in Greater Kansas City attended at least one Jewish program in the past year. Of these, educational and religious programs are most popular.
- Many Jewish adults in Greater Kansas City participated in Jewish activities online in the past year, including 53% who attended Jewish lifecycle events online, 42% who participated in online conversations about Jewish topics, and 41% who attended a Jewish program or class online.
- Many Jewish adults in Greater Kansas City participated in informal Jewish cultural activities in the past year, including discussing Jewish topics (93%), eating Jewish foods (89%), consuming Jewish culture (83%), reading Jewish publications (81%), and studying Jewish texts (43%).
- Twenty-five percent of Jewish adults in Greater Kansas City volunteered for Jewish organizations in the past year.
- Sixty-six percent of Jewish adults in Greater Kansas City donated to Jewish organizations in the past year, including 14% who donated to the Jewish Federation of Greater Kansas City.

Jewish Organizations and Programs

Members of the Greater Kansas City Jewish community participate in a wide range of Jewish organizations and activities. Twenty-seven percent of households reported they belong to a local Jewish organization other than a synagogue or the JCC (Table 7.1). In addition to formal membership organizations, 13% of Jewish households said they belong to a Jewish informal or grassroots group in the area. There are no meaningful differences in membership by age, geography,

and whether there are children in the household. The majority of the Immersed engagement group (84%) belongs to a local Jewish organization, followed by 42% of the Affiliated group.

Table 7.1. Jewish organization and group memberships in Greater Kansas City

	Local Jewish organization (%)	Informal Jewish group (%)
All Jewish households	27	13
Engagement group		
Cultural	13	4
Personal	6	18
Affiliated	42	18
Connected	29	9
Immersed	84	46
Household age		
18-39	25	12
40-54	28	18
55-64	19	10
65-74	30	20
75+	41	18
State		
Kansas	28	13
Missouri	25	14
Region		
City	26	12
High-Density Suburbs	31	17
Other Suburbs	16	14
Marital status		
Inmarried	35	24
Intermarried	25	12
Not married	23	11
Child in household		
No	29	17
Yes	22	12
Synagogue member		
No	16	10
Yes	45	23

Although about one quarter of Jewish households belong to a local Jewish organization, more than half of Jewish adults participated in a Jewish program, whether in-person or online, at least once in the past year: 25% participated rarely, 19% sometimes, and 13% often (Table 7.2). Attendance remained highest among synagogue members and Jewish adults in the Immersed group. Ninety-six

percent of the Immersed engagement group occasionally or frequently participated in Jewish programming over the past year, as did 49% of synagogue members.

Table 7.2. Frequency of Jewish program participation, past year

	Never (%)	Rarely (%)	Sometimes (%)	Often (%)
All Jewish adults	43	25	19	13
Engagement group				
Cultural	76	9	10	5
Personal	51	46	1	2
Affiliated	30	33	23	13
Connected	17	36	27	20
Immersed	1	3	47	49
Age				
18-39	21	40	19	20
40-54	47	25	14	14
55-64	54	20	14	11
65-74	43	28	20	10
75+	41	22	24	14
State				
Kansas	44	23	19	14
Missouri	43	29	20	8
Region				
City	41	29	18	13
High-Density Suburbs	46	18	22	14
Other Suburbs	41	39	12	8
Marital status				
Inmarried	38	28	17	17
Intermarried	55	23	9	13
Not married	32	31	29	8
Parent				
No	45	23	21	11
Yes	39	32	11	19
Synagogue member				
No	53	28	11	8
Yes	25	26	27	22

The types of programming people attended varied (Table 7.3). Educational programming was the most popular type of program (31% of Jewish adults), followed by religious (24%) programs. Sixteen percent of Jewish adults attended a cultural event over the past year, 12% a charitable event, 9% a social event, and 6% a political event.

Nearly half of Jewish adults ages 18-39 participated in a religious event last year, more than any other age group.

Table 7.3. Types of Jewish programs attended, past year

	Educational (%)	Religious (%)	Cultural (%)	Charitable (%)	Social (%)	Political (%)
All Jewish adults	31	24	16	12	9	6
Engagement group						
Cultural	10	1	9	2	7	1
Personal	12	9	16	5	3	4
Affiliated	23	34	15	11	14	2
Connected	49	49	32	20	11	12
Immersed	76	68	48	41	33	15
Age						
18-39	38	48	15	10	21	7
40-54	26	25	22	14	13	5
55-64	19	18	13	11	7	3
65-74	26	19	26	13	6	8
75+	32	22	30	19	6	3
State						
Kansas	33	31	18	14	13	4
Missouri	26	16	13	9	7	8
Region						
City	29	21	19	9	11	8
High-Density Suburbs	34	30	21	14	9	3
Other Suburbs	22	22	16	13	5	9
Marital status						
Inmarried	29	31	17	18	15	5
Intermarried	19	16	14	5	7	7
Not married	36	32	17	12	9	4
Parent						
No	31	23	15	13	9	5
Yes	28	29	22	11	18	8
Synagogue member						
No	19	16	16	7	8	4
Yes	40	43	25	20	16	7

In the past year, Jewish adults in Greater Kansas City attended programs, either in person or online, sponsored by many local organizations (Table 7.4). Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic at the time of the survey, more attended an online program than an in-person one. Attendance in programs by different sponsors varied by Jewish adults' characteristics (Table 7.5). More Jewish

adults ages 18-39 than older Jewish adults attended a Chabad program. Thirty-six percent of parents attended a program through the JCC, compared to 19% of non-parents. Perhaps because of the availability of online programming, there are not meaningful regional differences for program sponsors, although a greater share of Kansans attended synagogue and federation programs than Missourians.

Table 7.4. Sponsors of Greater Kansas City Jewish programs in past year

	Participated in-person only (%)	Participated online only (%)	Participated both in-person and online (%)	Did not participate (%)	Total (%)
A congregation or synagogue	4	12	9	75	100
The JCC	8	8	5	79	100
Jewish Federation of Greater Kansas City	1	10	2	87	100
A Chabad	5	5	2	87	100
A young adult/young professional organization (age < 40)	13	12	16	59	100

Table 7.5. Sponsors of Greater Kansas City Jewish programs by subpopulation, past year

	A congregation or synagogue in Greater Kansas City (%)	The JCC in Greater Kansas City (%)	Jewish Federation of Greater Kansas City (%)	A Chabad in Greater Kansas City (%)
All Jewish adults	25	21	13	13
Engagement group				
Cultural	4	7	1	1
Personal	8	16	5	8
Affiliated	37	26	12	10
Connected	44	35	24	27
Immersed	81	54	53	34
Age				
18-39	37	27	18	22
40-54	26	26	13	7
55-64	27	16	12	12
65-74	25	20	12	7
75+	26	24	15	9
State				
Kansas	32	24	16	12
Missouri	19	18	8	15
Region				
City	24	26	13	15
High-Density Suburbs	31	22	15	12
Other Suburbs	23	15	11	6
Marital status				
Inmarried	34	28	21	17
Intermarried	13	19	7	4
Not married	35	16	9	11
Parent				
No	29	19	13	14
Yes	24	36	18	10
Synagogue member				
No	15	16	8	6
Yes	49	31	23	21

Online Jewish Activities

Many Jewish adults participated in Jewish life online, as organized and communal life turned to tools such as Zoom and livestreaming in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. About half of Jewish adults participated in an online observance of a Jewish life-cycle event in the past year (Tables 7.6

and 7.7), and about two-in-five Jewish adults participated in an online conversation about Judaism and being Jewish or an online Jewish program or class. (See Chapter 6 for participation in online-only services.)

Most Jewish adults in the Immersed group participated in one of the three forms of online Jewish life. While more in the Personal group than the Affiliated group were part of an online conversation about Judaism (45% versus 31%), fewer in the Personal group participated in an online program compared to those in the Affiliated group (19% versus 33%).

Table 7.6. Online Jewish activities, past year

	Never (%)	Sometimes (%)	Rarely (%)	Often (%)	Total (%)
Jewish life cycle event	47	22	23	7	100
Online conversation about Judaism and being Jewish	58	15	21	7	100
Online Jewish program or class	59	14	19	7	100

Table 7.7. Online Jewish activities, past year

	Jewish life cycle event (%)	Online conversation about Judaism and being Jewish (%)	Online Jewish program or class (%)
All Jewish adults	53	42	41
Engagement group			
Cultural	25	23	26
Personal	58	45	19
Affiliated	65	31	33
Connected	70	51	61
Immersed	86	68	92
Age			
18-39	53	63	40
40-54	54	34	34
55-64	42	23	45
65-74	65	38	34
75+	57	31	50
State			
Kansas	59	37	36
Missouri	40	43	48
Region			
City	42	48	49
High-Density Suburbs	59	35	33
Other Suburbs	52	37	44
Marital status			
Inmarried	71	39	47
Intermarried	34	34	26
Not married	44	44	41
Parent			
No	52	38	41
Yes	57	42	30
Synagogue member			
No	41	35	29
Yes	71	43	54

Informal Cultural Activities

Informal and cultural activities include Jewish activities that are not necessarily sponsored by Jewish organizations, such as discussing Jewish topics, eating Jewish foods, or reading Jewish books (Tables 7.8a and 7.8b). The most common activity was discussing Jewish topics. Of all Jewish adults in Greater Kansas City, 93% discussed Jewish topics in the past year, including 31% who discussed

Jewish topics frequently. A strong majority of Jewish adults (89%) also ate Jewish foods in the past year, with 24% doing so frequently. Most of the Jewish community also engaged in a Jewish cultural activity at least once over the past year (83%), and about one quarter did so frequently (24%). Roughly four-in-five Jewish adults read Jewish publications (81%) in the past year, and 31% did so frequently. Fewer Jewish adults studied or learned Jewish texts, with 43% doing so at least once and 13% doing so frequently.

Table 7.8a. Individual Jewish activities, past year

	Talked about Jewish topics		Ate Jewish foods		Consumed Jewish culture	
	Ever (%)	Frequently (%)	Ever (%)	Frequently (%)	Ever (%)	Frequently (%)
All Jewish adults	93	31	89	24	83	24
Engagement group						
Cultural	87	4	81	3	66	9
Personal	94	29	99	26	95	15
Affiliated	96	21	83	10	75	7
Connected	95	65	98	55	100	55
Immersed	100	70	100	51	100	55
Age						
18-39	95	41	96	33	94	23
40-54	94	27	89	30	82	26
55-64	96	26	90	14	75	21
65-74	89	30	87	16	90	26
75+	96	29	90	28	77	20
State						
Kansas	92	30	87	26	86	25
Missouri	97	31	91	17	80	19
Region						
City	97	38	92	20	79	23
High-Density Suburbs	94	29	91	26	86	26
Other Suburbs	86	24	88	20	86	15
Marital status						
Inmarried	96	39	95	33	87	29
Intermarried	89	18	83	11	77	14
Not married	93	29	92	20	89	24
Parent						
No	94	30	91	20	84	24
Yes	90	31	89	36	83	21
Synagogue member						
No	91	19	89	17	80	17
Yes	97	47	93	32	91	32

Table 7.8b. Individual Jewish activities, past year

	Read Jewish publications		Studied Jewish texts	
	Ever (%)	Frequently (%)	Ever (%)	Frequently (%)
All Jewish adults	81	31	43	13
Engagement group				
Cultural	52	8	19	0
Personal	98	14	23	1
Affiliated	81	17	39	6
Connected	100	67	80	37
Immersed	100	74	93	44
Age				
18-39	84	21	52	19
40-54	82	23	45	14
55-64	74	24	34	8
65-74	88	39	44	12
75+	81	45	38	10
State				
Kansas	85	31	40	14
Missouri	74	24	51	10
Region				
City	75	26	51	15
High-Density Suburbs	85	32	38	13
Other Suburbs	81	21	49	9
Marital status				
Inmarried	86	37	45	18
Intermarried	74	18	38	7
Not married	84	27	46	11
Parent				
No	81	32	44	13
Yes	83	17	41	14
Synagogue member				
No	74	17	30	7
Yes	93	47	62	22

Volunteering and Philanthropy

In the Greater Kansas City Jewish community, 25% of Jewish adults reported that they volunteered for a Jewish organization in the past year, and 35% volunteered for or with a non-Jewish organization (Table 7.9). Participation in volunteer activities differed based on respondents' characteristics. Unsurprisingly, members of the Immersed engagement group volunteered more for

Jewish causes compared to other adults (82%). Similar shares of inmarried and intermarried adults volunteered overall (50% and 53% respectively), but more intermarried Jews volunteered for non-Jewish organizations, and more inmarried Jews volunteered for Jewish organizations.

Table 7.9. Volunteering, past year

Volunteering results	Any volunteering (%)	For or with non-Jewish organization (%)	For or with Jewish organization (%)
All Jewish adults	46	35	25
Engagement group			
Cultural	32	31	3
Personal	37	33	7
Affiliated	56	38	36
Connected	49	38	36
Immersed	85	47	82
Age			
18-39	37	28	26
40-54	57	48	22
55-64	45	37	22
65-74	46	34	27
75+	49	31	26
State			
Kansas	46	33	25
Missouri	46	43	22
Region			
City	48	44	28
High-Density Suburbs	47	32	27
Other Suburbs	40	36	7
Marital status			
Inmarried	50	32	35
Intermarried	53	49	16
Not married	30	26	15
Parent			
No	43	33	25
Yes	57	45	27
Synagogue member			
No	40	35	12
Yes	56	37	43

Within the Greater Kansas City Jewish community, 88% of households reported making a charitable donation in the past year (Table 7.10). Sixty-six percent gave to Jewish organizations, including 61%

that gave to both Jewish and non-Jewish organizations, and 5% that gave only to Jewish organizations. Among all Jewish households, 14% made donations to the Jewish Federation of Greater Kansas City, representing 21% of households that donated to at least one Jewish cause.

Table 7.10. Charitable donations, past year

	Both Jewish and non-Jewish (%)	Jewish only (%)	Non-Jewish only (%)	No donations (%)	Federation donor (%)
All Jewish households	61	5	22	12	14
Engagement group					
Cultural	34	3	45	18	8
Personal	52	1	23	24	4
Affiliated	87	4	4	5	20
Connected	77	8	4	11	16
Immersed	87	13	0	0	42
Household age					
18-39	51	8	28	13	8
40-54	49	5	32	15	12
55-64	63	2	20	15	15
65-74	68	4	20	9	18
75+	57	8	8	26	18
State					
Kansas	57	5	22	15	16
Missouri	61	3	25	11	10
Region					
City	63	4	25	9	11
High-Density Suburbs	61	5	19	15	18
Other Suburbs	46	4	33	17	8
Marital status					
Inmarried	79	6	7	7	23
Intermarried	46	3	40	11	7
Not married	255	6	15	24	15
Child in household					
No	63	4	18	15	16
Yes	46	5	36	12	9
Synagogue member					
No	46	3	33	19	8
Yes	78	8	7	7	24

Regardless of their status as volunteers or donors, respondents were asked about the most important causes for which they might volunteer or donate (Tables 7.11a and 7.11b). More Jewish adults reported favoring non-Jewish and secular causes over Jewish ones: three quarters care about human

services, 60% care about social justice, and 45% care about arts and culture. By contrast, about one quarter prioritize congregations or synagogues and Israel (27% each), and 21% prioritize Jewish education.

Although there are few differences in causes of interest by volunteer status, those who have done any volunteering in the past year reported being more interested in human services than those who did not volunteer (81% versus 68%). There are more contrasts by donor status. Those who did not make donations and those who donated to the Jewish Federation of Greater Kansas City view volunteering for or donating to Israel as important (43% and 49%, respectively), compared with those who donated only to non-Jewish organizations (10%) and those who donated to Jewish organizations but not to Federation (26%). Federation donors also prioritized congregations and Jewish education to a greater extent than did non-Federation donors and non-donors.

Table 7.1 | a. Most important causes for volunteering or donating

	Human services (%)	Social justice (%)	Arts and culture (%)	Congregation/ synagogue (%)	Israel (%)	Jewish education (%)	Other (%)
All Jewish adults	75	60	45	27	27	21	15
Engagement group							
Cultural	73	65	45	4	10	4	14
Personal	79	64	54	16	36	16	9
Affiliated	73	57	34	41	19	22	15
Connected	78	53	38	39	39	33	10
Immersed	85	60	41	74	44	52	18
Age							
18-39	72	57	45	20	41	29	9
40-54	79	56	42	28	35	22	19
55-64	77	65	45	34	22	17	14
65-74	77	65	44	27	24	17	12
75+	53	46	30	29	19	16	16
State							
Kansas	72	55	37	30	32	21	17
Missouri	79	71	57	22	20	19	10
Region							
City	85	76	61	19	23	19	11
High-Density Suburbs	70	51	39	32	33	21	15
Other Suburbs	73	62	26	23	20	23	16
Marital status							
Inmarried	80	64	50	39	33	28	10
Intermarried	76	60	36	14	13	11	19
Not married	60	49	36	24	40	20	15
Parent							
No	70	58	39	29	27	18	13
Yes	89	65	56	22	35	32	18
Synagogue member							
No	74	64	47	8	24	12	15
Yes	76	53	36	58	35	34	12

Table 7.11b. Most important causes for volunteering or donating

	Human services (%)	Social justice (%)	Arts and culture (%)	Congregation/ synagogue (%)	Israel (%)	Jewish education (%)	Other (%)
All Jewish adults	75	60	45	27	27	21	15
Volunteer							
No	68	55	44	25	32	20	7
Yes	81	64	45	30	25	22	21
Donor							
No donations	44	46	38	12	43	25	2
NJ donations only	84	65	39	2	10	2	17
Jewish donations, not Fed.	77	61	44	34	26	21	17
Federation	82	60	45	52	49	40	12

CHAPTER 8. COMMUNITY, CONNECTIONS, AND CONCERNS

Chapter Highlights

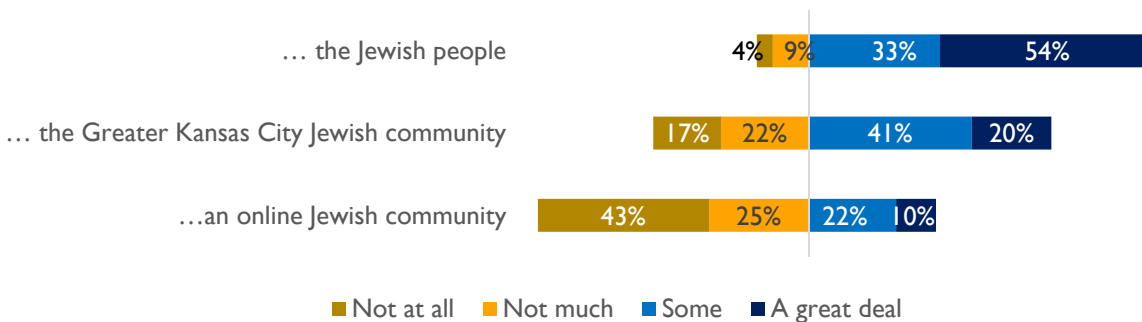
Members of the Greater Kansas City Jewish community exhibit multiple types of connections to their community. They feel connected to the Jewish people, their local Jewish community, and their Jewish friends, but they sometimes perceive barriers preventing their full participation in the Jewish community. They also express concerns about antisemitism, both in their community and in the wider world. This chapter explores the connections of Jewish adults in Greater Kansas City to the Jewish community, barriers that limit their participation in the Jewish community, and the context of their concern about antisemitism.

- Fifty-four percent of Jewish adults in Greater Kansas City feel a great deal of connection to the Jewish people, and another 33% feel some connection.
- Twenty percent of Jewish adults in Greater Kansas City feel a great deal of connection to the local Jewish community, and another 41% feel some connection.
- Ten percent of Jewish adults in Greater Kansas City feel a great deal of connection to an online Jewish community, and another 22% feel some connection.
- Twenty-six percent of Jewish adults in Greater Kansas City are very satisfied with their present level of participation in the local Jewish community, and another 46% are somewhat satisfied.
- The four most common barriers to participation cited by Jewish adults who are not very satisfied with their current level of participation in the Greater Kansas City Jewish community are a lack of interesting activities (30%), not knowing many people (23%), cost (21%), and the COVID-19 pandemic (20%).
- Two thirds (66%) of Jewish adults in Greater Kansas City said that half or more of their close friends are Jewish.
- Three quarters of Jewish adults in Greater Kansas City are very concerned about antisemitism in the United States (75%) and around the world (74%), but only 44% are very concerned about antisemitism in the Greater Kansas City area.
- Nine percent of Jewish adults in Greater Kansas City said they were victims of antisemitic incidents in the past year.

Feelings of Connection to the Jewish Community

The majority of Jewish adults in Greater Kansas City indicated they feel a sense of belonging to the Jewish people (Figure 8.1). More than half (54%) feel a great deal of connection, and 33% feel some connection. By contrast, 20% of Jewish adults feel a great deal of belonging to the Greater Kansas City Jewish community, and 41% feel some connection. Even fewer adults feel connected to an online Jewish community; just 10% feel a great deal of connection, and 22% feel some connection.

Figure 8.1. Feeling a sense of belonging to...



The extent to which adults feel a sense of belonging to Jewish communities varies by engagement group, marital status, and synagogue membership (Table 8.1). Compared to other groups, the fewest members of the Cultural group feel any sense of belonging to the Jewish people (86%), the Greater Kansas City Jewish community (70%), or an online Jewish community (27%). Fewer intermarried Jewish adults feel a sense of belonging to Jewish communities than do inmarried or single Jews.

Table 8.1. Feeling a sense of belonging to...

	... the Jewish people		...the Greater Kansas City Jewish community		... an online Jewish community	
	Any (%)	A great deal (%)	Any (%)	A great deal (%)	Any (%)	A great deal (%)
All Jewish adults	96	54	83	20	57	10
Engagement group						
Cultural	86	23	70	3	27	<1
Personal	94	37	81	10	62	6
Affiliated	99	58	93	35	70	10
Connected	99	81	90	27	70	15
Immersed	100	92	99	58	91	35
Age						
18-39	98	68	89	29	74	21
40-54	91	44	78	21	47	7
55-64	92	40	78	17	52	9
65-74	97	53	88	22	56	9
75+	95	59	89	30	67	14
State						
Kansas	94	55	85	27	60	15
Missouri	100	43	81	13	55	5
Region						
City	95	48	86	20	59	10
High-Density Suburbs	93	56	85	27	62	15
Other Suburbs	97	41	75	14	47	5
Marital status						
Inmarried	100	57	95	29	63	15
Intermarried	85	33	68	10	45	3
Not married	97	67	82	28	68	19
Parent						
No	96	56	85	25	62	14
Yes	94	38	79	16	47	7
Synagogue membership						
No	91	40	76	12	49	9
Yes	99	70	96	40	73	16

Regardless of their current level of involvement in the Greater Kansas City Jewish community, Jewish adults vary in degree to which they are satisfied with their connection. About one quarter of Jewish adults (26%) are very satisfied, 46% are somewhat satisfied, 20% are not too satisfied, and 8% are not at all satisfied (Table 8.2).

Satisfaction with current level of participation does not vary by age, region, or whether there are children in the household. It does, however, vary by Jewish engagement, state, marital status, synagogue membership, and feeling of belonging to the local community. The smallest share of the Personal engagement group (12%) feels very satisfied with their connection, and the largest share of the Immersed group feels very satisfied (50%). More Jewish adults in Kansas feel satisfied compared to those living in Missouri. Notably, about half of those who do not feel at all connected to the local Jewish community are somewhat (25%) or very (22%) satisfied with their current level of participation.

Table 8.2. Satisfaction with level of participation in the Greater Kansas City Jewish community

	Not at all satisfied (%)	Not too satisfied (%)	Somewhat satisfied (%)	Very satisfied (%)
All Jewish adults	8	20	46	26
Engagement group				
Cultural	9	21	46	25
Personal	11	23	54	12
Affiliated	3	15	55	27
Connected	10	24	41	25
Immersed	1	4	45	50
Age				
18-39	14	20	44	21
40-54	8	13	54	25
55-64	8	21	49	22
65-74	8	18	47	27
75+	11	20	38	31
State				
Kansas	9	20	42	30
Missouri	11	14	62	13
Region				
City	7	11	62	20
High-Density Suburbs	7	23	39	31
Other Suburbs	11	22	48	20
Marital status				
Inmarried	4	14	53	29
Intermarried	9	21	48	22
Not married	21	22	35	22
Parent				
No	7	21	45	28
Yes	11	14	55	19
Synagogue member				
No	13	22	46	18
Yes	3	13	49	35
Belonging to GKC community				
Not at all	25	28	25	22
Not much	9	33	41	17
Some	3	15	64	19
A great deal	2	4	46	49

Survey respondents who indicated that they are not very satisfied with their current level of connection were asked about conditions that influence their level of connection to the community (Tables 8.3a, 8.3b, 8.4a, and 8.4b). Thirty percent of all Jewish adults feel limited in their desired participation in the Greater Kansas City Jewish community by a lack of activities that interest them. Not knowing many people is a limitation felt by 23% of Jewish adults, but a greater share of those living in the Other Suburbs region express this concern than those in other geographic areas. The cost of Jewish programs and Jewish life is a limitation for 21% of all Jewish adults, but a greater concern for those who do not feel any sense of belonging to the local community (31%). Conversely, those who do not feel any belonging to the Greater Kansas City Jewish community feel less concerned about the COVID-19 pandemic's impact on their participation in the local Jewish community (7%), compared to 20% of all Jewish adults. The location of programs and activities is a limitation for only 6% of Jewish adults who reside in the High-Density Suburbs, compared with 30% of Jewish adults in other regions. Feeling unwelcome, not being confident in their Jewish knowledge, political views, and other issues are concerns for fewer Jewish adults.

Table 8.3a. Conditions that influence level of participation to Greater Kansas City Jewish community

	No interesting activities (%)	Don't know many people (%)	Too expensive (%)	COVID-19 (%)	Location (%)
All Jewish adults	30	23	21	20	17
Engagement group					
Cultural	42	28	14	8	12
Personal	18	29	37	28	30
Affiliated	28	19	20	20	13
Connected	19	10	23	25	14
Immersed	10	14	11	20	13
Age					
18-39	39	32	15	25	21
40-54	30	22	27	27	10
55-64	35	19	18	9	16
65-74	19	13	24	14	15
75+	7	20	24	26	15
State					
Kansas	25	17	23	18	8
Missouri	38	32	18	22	35
Region					
City	40	26	15	22	30
High-Density Suburbs	24	15	21	16	6
Other Suburbs	26	37	26	25	30
Marital status					
Inmarried	24	12	19	23	11
Intermarried	27	28	23	13	22
Not married	37	30	21	19	15
Parent					
No	27	18	19	15	15
Yes	32	33	27	35	25
Synagogue member					
No	36	25	24	17	17
Yes	17	15	15	22	14

Table 8.3b. Conditions that influence level of participation to Greater Kansas City Jewish community

	Feel unwelcome (%)	Not confident in Jewish knowledge (%)	Political views (%)	Other (%)
All Jewish adults	13	11	10	13
Engagement group				
Cultural	18	28	7	5
Personal	15	17	5	13
Affiliated	6	5	4	15
Connected	21	5	16	20
Immersed	7	4	7	12
Age				
18-39	11	22	6	23
40-54	17	13	4	11
55-64	19	23	10	12
65-74	11	13	7	11
75+	14	4	10	9
State				
Kansas	13	5	6	12
Missouri	13	25	12	17
Region				
City	11	23	10	17
High-Density Suburbs	12	4	5	10
Other Suburbs	18	17	11	16
Marital status				
Inmarried	11	12	4	8
Intermarried	20	14	12	15
Not married	12	5	8	24
Parent				
No	13	11	10	13
Yes	19	11	10	18
Synagogue member				
No	18	24	10	13
Yes	8	5	9	15

Table 8.4a. Conditions that influence level of participation to Greater Kansas City Jewish community

	No interesting activities (%)	Don't know many people (%)	Too expensive (%)	COVID-19 (%)	Location (%)
All Jewish adults	30	23	21	20	17
Belonging to GKC community					
Not at all	27	31	31	7	23
Not much	29	38	23	21	25
Some	35	17	23	25	13
A great deal	19	7	5	16	8
Satisfaction with connection					
Not at all satisfied	57	26	45	6	21
Not too satisfied	32	40	30	23	18
Somewhat satisfied	36	24	23	30	22
Very satisfied	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

Table 8.4b. Conditions that influence level of participation to Greater Kansas City Jewish community

	Feel unwelcome (%)	Not confident in Jewish knowledge (%)	Political views (%)	Other (%)
All Jewish adults	13	11	10	13
Belonging to GKC community				
Not at all	39	18	15	20
Not much	17	17	8	10
Some	10	16	7	12
A great deal	1	17	2	17
Satisfaction with connection				
Not at all satisfied	43	18	16	42
Not too satisfied	28	12	10	21
Somewhat satisfied	10	24	9	13
Very satisfied	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

Among the respondents who said there were “other” reasons that limited their participation in the community, 121 provided additional information. These “other” reasons included lack of free time, disabilities that make it difficult to access communal spaces, and others already cited (e.g., lack of interesting activities, COVID-19, feeling unwelcome):

Difficult to participate due to work, children’s activities, other constraints. Lack of free time is probably the most important factor.

I have had some significant [health challenges] over the past few years.

Activities are not appropriate for young children, or timing is not convenient for parents with childcare responsibilities.

I do not have a car. I live [far from most of the organizations] and have no way to get there.

I do not care for the online experience (caused by the COVID-19 pandemic). I am waiting to get back to more of a sense of normalcy and community participation with in-person services.

As a new member of the community who arrived the year Covid started, my ability to make new friends has been hampered.

My lifestyle and background does not fit in with the predominant majority of Jews attending synagogues and activities.

There is great contempt for the financially insecure.

The Jewish community here is very cliquish...They are not interested in including anyone new into the community.

I am Jewish but my partner isn't. I'm very worried that there won't be a community that welcomes my child's Jewish identity and my partner's non-Jewish identity.

Jewish Friends

Almost all Jewish adults in Greater Kansas City have at least some close friends who are Jewish (Table 8.5). Only 6% said they have no close Jewish friends, and 28% reported having hardly any close Jewish friends. Another 32% said that about half of their close friends are Jewish, 30% said most are, and 4% said all of their close friends are Jewish.

The Cultural group has the largest share of Jewish adults who do not have any close Jewish friends (16%). Twenty percent of Jewish adults living in the Other Suburbs region have no close Jewish friends. By contrast, 39% of adults in the High-Density Suburbs region said most (33%) or all (6%) of their friends are Jewish.

Table 8.5. Close Jewish friends

	None (%)	Hardly any (%)	About half (%)	Most (%)	All (%)
All Jewish adults	6	28	32	30	4
Engagement group					
Cultural	16	38	35	8	3
Personal	2	30	44	22	2
Affiliated	5	25	35	31	5
Connected	6	19	25	42	9
Immersed	2	14	16	61	7
Age					
18-39	6	34	31	25	4
40-54	9	34	38	17	2
55-64	10	22	40	25	3
65-74	7	25	35	27	6
75+	2	13	23	51	11
State					
Kansas	6	24	34	31	5
Missouri	10	35	37	15	3
Region					
City	8	27	41	20	3
High-Density Suburbs	4	22	35	33	6
Other Suburbs	20	44	21	13	2
Marital status					
Inmarried	1	12	36	44	7
Intermarried	16	45	32	7	<1
Not married	8	30	36	21	5
Parent					
No	7	25	34	29	5
Yes	8	34	38	17	4
Synagogue member					
No	10	31	40	15	3
Yes	3	20	27	45	6

Concerns about Antisemitism and Current Events

The majority of Jewish adults in Greater Kansas City are very concerned about antisemitism around the world (75%) and in the United States (74%; Table 8.6). They are less concerned about the Greater Kansas City area (44% very concerned). While Jewish adults ages 18-39 are less strongly concerned about antisemitism in the United States than are older Jews, there are not strong differences with regard to global and local antisemitism.

Despite high rates of concern about antisemitism, relatively few Jewish adults, 9%, reported having personally been a victim of antisemitism within the past year (Table 8.6). A greater share of Jewish adults ages 40-54 reported experiencing antisemitism (15%) compared to other age groups.

Table 8.6. Concerns about antisemitism

	Very concerned, antisemitism in the US (%)	Very concerned, antisemitism around the world (%)	Very concerned, antisemitism in Greater Kansas City (%)	Personally been a victim of antisemitism in past year (%)
All Jewish adults	75	74	44	9
Engagement group				
Cultural	76	67	38	2
Personal	77	82	47	15
Affiliated	67	68	30	7
Connected	73	76	30	8
Immersed	70	73	38	11
Age				
18-39	49	62	26	4
40-54	71	75	34	15
55-64	79	70	34	10
65-74	87	89	48	5
75+	75	70	34	1
State				
Kansas	78	79	49	10
Missouri	69	60	30	7
Region				
City	67	58	24	4
High-Density Suburbs	79	76	51	7
Other Suburbs	76	87	50	13
Marital status				
Inmarried	79	71	42	7
Intermarried	65	72	41	7
Not married	66	80	48	10
Parent				
No	76	77	45	6
Yes	56	58	36	12
Synagogue member				
No	77	74	49	9
Yes	72	73	36	9

Fifty-three survey respondents provided brief comments about the incidents where they were victims of antisemitism. Of these, 46 were specific enough to code by the intensity of the incident. One of these was coded as “intense” for a tangible threat to safety, involving a neighbor who attempted to run over the respondent and their family with his car. Ten were coded as “moderate,” involving workplace discrimination, vandalism, or harassment in person or over social media:

I had to work on Shabbat or risk being fired.

A banner over the Downtown Loop that said ‘Jews = Death.’

Antisemitic slurs shouted at me as I walked to synagogue.

The remaining 35 incidents were coded as “mild,” typically involving microaggressions, social snubbing, insults, and stereotyping:

A number of my white Christian acquaintances don’t have a clue they are saying antisemitic things.

Somebody made a comment to me about Jews being cheap and stingy, without knowing that I’m Jewish.

Nothing directed at me, but comments overheard. ‘Jewing someone down’ on a price, ‘he looks like a Jew.’ Comments like that.

The survey of Jewish households in Greater Kansas City took place during a politically charged period: a presidential election and transition, a pandemic that disrupted work and home life for more than one year, and ongoing activism around violence against minority communities. As noted above, Jewish adults express strong concerns about antisemitism. Yet, the survey results indicate they are just as concerned about the state of politics and government in the United States, the state of the healthcare system, and systematic racism against Black people (Table 8.7).

Just as with antisemitism in the United States and around the world, approximately three quarters of Jewish adults are very concerned about the state of politics and government in the United States (74%), systemic racism in the United States (73%), and the state of the healthcare system (71%). Fewer feel as concerned about the state of the economy (36%).

Table 8.7. Concerned about recent events, very concerned

	Politics and government in the US (%)	Systemic racism in the US (%)	State of the healthcare system (%)	State of the economy (%)
All Jewish adults	74	73	71	36
Engagement group				
Cultural	73	79	79	32
Personal	76	82	76	32
Affiliated	77	67	56	29
Connected	76	62	57	50
Immersed	73	73	69	33
Age				
18-39	65	69	71	35
40-54	69	76	63	27
55-64	73	76	77	34
65-74	90	73	70	45
75+	86	66	68	46
State				
Kansas	79	67	65	39
Missouri	65	86	83	31
Region				
City	60	89	83	28
High-Density Suburbs	82	67	66	41
Other Suburbs	70	63	65	34
Marital status				
Inmarried	67	74	67	28
Intermarried	82	73	73	41
Not married	81	67	72	45
Parent				
No	76	70	71	39
Yes	69	81	67	27
Synagogue member				
No	76	75	77	36
Yes	74	68	59	37

CHAPTER 9. CONNECTIONS TO ISRAEL

Chapter Highlights

The Greater Kansas City Jewish community has strong ties to Israel, grounded in religious, cultural, and familial connections. Jewish adults in Greater Kansas City travel to Israel at higher rates than American Jews overall, feel very connected to Israel, and closely follow news about Israel on a regular basis.

- Sixty percent of Jewish adults in Greater Kansas City have visited Israel at least once.
- About two thirds of Jewish adults in Greater Kansas City feel somewhat (41%) or very (26%) attached to Israel.
- About two thirds of Jewish adults in Greater Kansas City feel they have some (51%) or a lot (14%) in common with Jewish adults in Israel.
- Approximately two thirds of Jewish adults in Greater Kansas City follow news about Israel somewhat (44%) or very (20%) closely.

Travel to Israel

Sixty percent of Jewish adults in Greater Kansas City have visited Israel at least once (Tables 9.1a and 9.1b), a higher rate than the national average of 45%.²³ This includes 30% who have been to Israel once and 22% who have visited multiple times. Another 8% of Jewish adults have lived in Israel in the past, including 4% who identify as Israeli citizens (not shown in table). Fewer Jews in the Cultural and Affiliated groups have been to Israel than those in other engagement groups. Additionally, more Jews in the City region have been to Israel than those living elsewhere in Kansas City. It is noteworthy that 20% of those who reported feeling very much connected to Israel have never been there.

Table 9.1a. Travel to Israel

	Never (%)	Once (%)	More than once (%)	Previously lived there (%)
All Jewish adults	40	30	22	8
Engagement group				
Cultural	55	35	8	1
Personal	43	31	19	7
Affiliated	50	31	18	1
Connected	22	24	42	12
Immersed	13	20	47	20
Age				
18-39	31	24	35	10
40-54	46	33	12	9
55-64	44	33	17	6
65-74	49	26	22	3
75+	44	25	29	3
State				
Kansas	46	25	23	6
Missouri	34	38	22	6
Region				
City	26	39	29	6
High-Density Suburbs	44	26	23	7
Other Suburbs	61	25	10	4
Marital status				
Inmarried	29	33	30	8
Intermarried	59	27	8	6
Not married	47	23	25	5
Parent				
No	44	26	23	7
Yes	37	38	21	5
Synagogue member				
No	50	31	14	5
Yes	31	26	35	8

Table 9.1b. Travel to Israel

	Never (%)	Once (%)	More than once (%)	Previously lived there (%)
All Jewish adults	40	30	22	8
Emotional attachment				
Not at all attached	88	9	1	2
Not too attached	63	25	8	4
Somewhat attached	32	42	21	5
Very attached	20	23	45	12
Commonality with Israeli Jews				
Nothing at all	--	--	--	--
Not much	65	24	7	3
Some	35	32	27	6
A lot	23	19	41	17

Types of Israel Travel

Among Jewish adults who are younger than age 50 (and thus have ever been age-eligible), 37% have been to Israel through Birthright Israel (Tables 9.2a and 9.2b). This corresponds to 11% of all Jewish adults in Greater Kansas City. Citizens and former residents of Israel were more likely to have gone on an educational or volunteer trip to Israel than those who have visited multiple times, but less likely to have gone on a trip sponsored by a Jewish organization.

Table 9.2a. Types of travel to Israel

	Birthright (age < 50) (%)	Educational program or volunteer trip (%)	Trip sponsored by Jewish organization (%)	Business trip (%)	Long-term program (%)	Vacation (%)
All Jewish adults	37	14	25	3	12	32
Engagement group						
Cultural	--	4	13	<1	4	26
Personal	--	7	23	<1	13	24
Affiliated	24	16	27	2	11	21
Connected	--	18	35	5	15	45
Immersed	40	33	52	13	23	58
Age						
18-39	42	23	18	1	22	29
40-54	3	7	31	8	11	30
55-64	n/a	9	26	2	9	37
65-74	n/a	12	31	1	6	24
75+	n/a	9	23	4	5	34
State						
Kansas	23	13	29	3	11	28
Missouri	--	15	16	2	12	39
Region						
City	--	15	19	1	13	44
High-Density Suburbs	21	14	29	4	12	29
Other Suburbs	--	6	21	2	6	18
Marital status						
Inmarried	41	15	32	5	14	45
Intermarried	36	8	16	<1	8	15
Not married	34	12	24	3	8	24
Parent						
No	38	14	27	3	10	30
Yes	20	12	20	4	15	33
Synagogue member						
No	24	8	18	1	7	27
Yes	37	20	38	6	18	37

Table 9.2b. Types of travel to Israel

	Birthright (age < 50) (%)	Educational program or volunteer trip (%)	Trip sponsored by Jewish organization (%)	Business trip (%)	Long-term program (%)	Vacation (%)
All Jewish adults	37	14	25	3	12	32
Travel to Israel						
Never	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Once	44	6	38	<1	7	40
More than once	66	33	57	5	20	68
I lived in Israel	--	51	30	25	70	65
Emotional attachment						
Not at all attached	--	2	1	0	2	8
Not too attached	--	8	21	<1	7	11
Somewhat attached	43	10	24	2	14	35
Very attached	28	24	43	8	14	50
Commonality with Israeli Jews						
Nothing at all	--	--	--	--	--	--
Not much	15	7	19	<1	6	10
Some	40	15	30	2	15	31
A lot	--	21	38	10	16	54

Emotional Connection to Israel

The Jewish community of Greater Kansas City feels connected to Israel; 85% reported feeling at least a little attached, including 26% who are very attached (Tables 9.3a and 9.3b). Virtually all members of the Affiliated, Connected, and Immersed engagement groups feel some degree of attachment. Even among Jewish adults who have never been to Israel, only 28% do not feel any attachment to Israel.

Table 9.3a. Emotional attachment to Israel

	Not at all attached (%)	Not too attached (%)	Somewhat attached (%)	Very attached (%)
All Jewish adults	15	18	41	26
Engagement group				
Cultural	28	17	47	8
Personal	14	25	35	26
Affiliated	9	34	40	17
Connected	2	9	34	55
Immersed	1	11	39	48
Age				
18-39	19	18	29	34
40-54	17	19	42	22
55-64	11	19	47	23
65-74	10	24	34	32
75+	9	10	50	30
State				
Kansas	15	17	37	31
Missouri	10	23	46	21
Region				
City	10	20	44	27
High-Density Suburbs	14	19	36	31
Other Suburbs	16	18	46	21
Marital status				
Inmarried	5	17	46	32
Intermarried	26	26	34	14
Not married	15	14	33	38
Parent				
No	12	19	39	30
Yes	19	20	42	20
Synagogue member				
No	20	18	39	24
Yes	4	20	41	35

Table 9.3b. Emotional attachment to Israel

	Not at all attached (%)	Not too attached (%)	Somewhat attached (%)	Very attached (%)
All Jewish adults	15	18	41	26
Travel to Israel				
Never	28	28	30	13
Once	4	16	57	22
More than once	<1	6	37	56
I lived in Israel	4	5	32	58
Commonality with Israeli Jews				
Nothing at all	--	--	--	--
Not much	24	44	29	3
Some	8	13	53	26
A lot	0	1	13	87

Related to attachment to Israel, the vast majority of Jewish adults in Greater Kansas City feel they have at least something in common with Jews in Israel (Tables 9.4a and 9.4b). About two thirds (65%) feel they have some or a lot of commonality with Jews in Israel, and the remaining one third feel not much (25%) or no commonality at all (9%). As would be expected, people who previously lived in Israel feel they have more in common with Jews in Israel than do people who have not lived there.

Table 9.4a. Feelings of commonality with Jews in Israel

	Nothing at all (%)	Not much (%)	Some (%)	A lot (%)
All Jewish adults	9	25	51	14
Engagement group				
Cultural	24	36	38	3
Personal	6	32	49	14
Affiliated	6	37	54	3
Connected	0	13	47	40
Immersed	0	9	57	34
Age				
18-39	3	20	54	23
40-54	7	34	45	14
55-64	9	24	46	21
65-74	3	37	45	15
75+	5	25	50	21
State				
Kansas	6	29	44	21
Missouri	6	26	59	9
Region				
City	7	22	63	9
High-Density Suburbs	6	28	42	24
Other Suburbs	5	34	51	10
Marital status				
Inmarried	2	24	52	21
Intermarried	13	38	42	7
Not married	3	23	48	27
Parent				
No	10	26	45	19
Yes	8	29	51	11
Synagogue member				
No	14	29	43	13
Yes	2	24	50	24

Table 9.4b. Feelings of commonality with Jews in Israel

	Nothing at all (%)	Not much (%)	Some (%)	A lot (%)
All Jewish adults	9	25	51	14
Travel to Israel				
Never	11	42	38	10
Once	1	26	59	13
More than once	3	9	57	32
I lived in Israel	0	6	45	49
Emotional attachment				
Not at all attached	24	49	27	0
Not too attached	5	63	31	<1
Somewhat attached	4	22	69	6
Very attached	0	3	43	54

News about Israel

About two thirds of Greater Kansas City's Jewish adults follow news about Israel somewhat (44%) or very closely (20%; Tables 9.5a and 9.5b). Past travel to Israel, feelings of connection to Israel, and feeling that one has something in common with Israelis are all correlated with following news about Israel more closely.

Table 9.5a. Following news about Israel

	Not at all closely (%)	Not too closely (%)	Somewhat closely (%)	Very closely (%)
All Jewish adults	4	31	44	20
Engagement group				
Cultural	5	31	54	9
Personal	4	43	40	13
Affiliated	5	45	39	11
Connected	1	5	48	46
Immersed	3	10	43	44
Age				
18-39	5	37	33	24
40-54	5	28	50	17
55-64	2	24	55	18
65-74	2	23	42	33
75+	3	21	52	24
State				
Kansas	4	26	45	25
Missouri	3	34	46	18
Region				
City	3	29	48	19
High-Density Suburbs	4	24	46	26
Other Suburbs	3	41	37	18
Marital status				
Inmarried	1	25	52	22
Intermarried	7	33	44	15
Not married	5	26	34	35
Parent				
No	4	26	44	26
Yes	3	36	50	11
Synagogue member				
No	4	31	46	19
Yes	3	23	44	30

Table 9.5b. Following news about Israel

	Not at all closely (%)	Not too closely (%)	Somewhat closely (%)	Very closely (%)
All Jewish adults	4	31	44	20
Travel to Israel				
Never	6	34	45	15
Once	1	28	50	21
More than once	1	16	45	38
I lived in Israel	4	16	38	41
Emotional attachment				
Not at all attached	16	52	22	9
Not too attached	4	51	40	5
Somewhat attached	2	22	68	9
Very attached	<1	9	29	62
Commonality with Israeli Jews				
Nothing at all	--	--	--	--
Not much	3	42	48	6
Some	3	32	47	19
A lot	0	1	29	70

CHAPTER 10. IN THE WORDS OF COMMUNITY MEMBERS

To provide an additional layer of insight into the thoughts and feelings of members of the Greater Kansas City Jewish community, the survey closed with two open-ended questions:

- Based on your own experience, what do you consider to be the strengths and gaps of Greater Kansas City Jewish community?
- The COVID-19 crisis has changed lives in many ways. In what ways, if any, do you expect your Jewish life to change after the crisis is over compared to before the crisis?

This chapter summarizes the responses to these questions. The first question elicited 577 total responses, and the second question received 629. All responses were coded to identify key themes. Many responses touched on multiple themes and may be included in more than one category.

Strengths and Gaps

Unity, Inclusion, and Accessibility

Seventy-six respondents described positively the community's efforts to be open, welcoming, inclusive, and accessible to all. Respondents discussed a variety of ways different institutions within the community work together to build community across geographic, denominational, and demographic bounds. They described the people in the community as friendly, warm, and caring, with strong congregations and institutions that work together well and actively cater to the needs and interests of a diverse community.

I love being part of the Greater Kansas City Jewish community because...most programming is inclusive of and has attendance from all sects of Judaism and is supported by several Jewish organizations. I love how collaborative the organizations are, especially during this past crazy year. There are also a lot of synagogues, but it doesn't feel like factions. With the exception of prayer, it usually feels like one big community.

The community is close-knit—there is a wide social network. Because our day school is non-denominational, the different denominations work closely together, and there is a lot of interaction.

The JCC and Federation pull from all segments of the Jewish community. The diversity is a huge positive in the Greater Kansas City Jewish community.

Leadership, both professional and lay, is very strong.

We have fairly good clergy and leaders that have formed strong organizations.

[This is] a community with strong ties, extended families, or long-term friendships. Several options for affiliation. Strong JCC, community organizations, and support systems.

Exclusivity

Although the overall portrait presented by survey respondents is of a community that expends a great deal of effort trying to include everyone, 64 respondents commented on specific ways they felt the community was failing to include specific segments of the population, including newcomers, Jews of Color, LGBTQ Jews, those living outside the High-Density Suburbs, those who are struggling financially, interfaith families, people who seek innovation in communal programs or practices, and those who hold unpopular views about US politics or Israel.

Our Jewish community is great at collaboration between Jewish communal agencies, lots of partnership programs. Lots of opportunities to get involved if you are already involved in the Jewish community (low-hanging fruit), but for those who don't seek out the community, our communal agencies don't do a good job of finding and engaging those people. We are very focused on the Jewish community in and around Overland Park but feel that we are missing making our community inclusive to those who live in midtown, downtown, etc., as well as LGBTQ, Jews of Color, etc.

I believe it to be necessary to strive for inclusivity, particularly those Jews who are struggling economically and/or located in areas...away from the core of the Jewish community. It is also important that the opportunity to participate in and contribute (as a volunteer) to Jewish communal events be as open as possible regardless of financial condition.

To some extent, [Kansas City] is a best-kept secret in the United States! However, there is an undercurrent that this is not so much a Jewish community as a community of Jewish cliques, mainly on the basis of family, but also exclusive school or business relationships.

I don't feel like this is a welcoming Jewish community unless you are actively involved with a Jewish organization, have family connections, or are a heavy contributor, either financially or through volunteering.

If you weren't born here and don't have a family with kids, you're NEVER going to be welcome here!

The downside [of having so many people in the community who were born and raised here] is that it is somewhat hard to break into the establishment.

For the most part, the Kansas City Jewish community is synagogue-centric and insular. Outsiders who relocate to Kansas City have a hard time assimilating into the Jewish community, especially if they do not want to join a synagogue.

Synagogues and Jewish Organizations

In addition to the comments cited earlier in this chapter about the role of synagogues in creating community in Greater Kansas City, 60 respondents specifically cited synagogues as either strengths or weaknesses within the community, and a similar number commented on other Jewish organizations or programs. Respondents who admired synagogues' and other organizations' efforts described them as vibrant, dynamic institutions, working hard to meet the needs of a growing and changing population during a challenging time.

[Synagogues in Greater Kansas City] could be considered a national model for engaging modern Jews.

Kansas City synagogues work very well together and even hold a number of city-wide events together.

This is a very strong Jewish community. You can be as active or inactive as you want. There are always things going on. I think people are 'Zoomed out.' We are looking forward to 'reentering' the world as things continue to get better.

The JCC campus and Family Services are great strengths of our community. The JCC is a wonderful hub of all kinds of activities, education, services, and resources.

However, not every respondent felt that synagogues and other Jewish organizations cared about them. Respondents who cited synagogues and other Jewish organizations negatively felt excluded, not valued beyond their ability to contribute to the financial well-being of the institutions, or that they were forced by organizations to choose between engaging in the community and loyalty to family or between engaging with different segments of the community.

I have never found a welcoming congregation EVER! They...look at you as a financial asset and not a human being.

Do not like [organization] fundraising because we were told on a phone call that they know [our income] and that we should make [a donation of a particular size]. It's disturbing.

[Too many organization] emphasize capital as opposed to people and program investments.

Splintered factions have formed within the community. Largely built around shuls, it seems they don't all play nicely with each other.

[Synagogue] ruined my family's involvement in what was a very active Jewish life because they would not even talk to [my child] about marrying someone outside of the Jewish faith. Too busy, too uncaring to even have a conversation...Since [our child's] marriage, our [child-in-law] has [become very active in other Jewish organizations] and has incorporated much Jewish learning into our grandchildren's lives.

Affordable Jewish Life

Although many newcomers to the Greater Kansas City Jewish community cited the low cost of living as a reason to move to the area, 21 respondents indicated they did not believe the region's affordability extended to the cost of participating in the Jewish community.

There are too many expensive buildings for the Jewish community to support.

I believe that the Jewish organizations and synagogues should actively seek out Jewish families that are unable to belong to anything due to financial reasons. I particularly have become upset with the dues structure and High Holiday ticket amount that I have basically pulled back from everything...We managed to put my children through the [Jewish education system] due to the generosity of [extended family]. We would never have had the funds to do that otherwise.

Many people are too proud to admit they are unable to afford things, especially when approached by clergy for 'special projects' or 'building funds,' resulting in families becoming overextended and then unable to pay for day-to-day food/ medicine needs because funds were instead given away.

I feel that often the wealthy segment of the community runs the organizations and don't appreciate the financial limitations of many Jewish individuals in our community. The poor do get good attention, but those in the middle may be ignored.

Changes to Jewish Life from COVID-19

Among the respondents who answered the question about possible changes to Jewish life after the pandemic, 240 said they expected no changes at all. However, there were 359 comments about respondents' current engagement with the Jewish community, their expectations for engagement once the pandemic is over, and their hopes and concerns about the impact of COVID-19 on the Jewish community.

Expanded Options for Participation in Jewish Life

Ninety-eight respondents commented positively on new dimensions of online programming that they hope will continue even after the community returns to full in-person programming. In particular, respondents see the potential to expand access to communal programming to people who might otherwise miss these options due to health, cost, time, social anxiety, or other reasons. However, they also caution that communal organizations should use the challenges of creating a sense of community during the pandemic as an opportunity to rethink the ways they approach programming and planning.

I believe that Zoom and similar platforms should continue to be used in tandem with in-person events in order that those who are physically unable to attend in person or who may be reluctant [to attend] will have the opportunity to participate in and be a part of Jewish life.

Love the ability to engage online. Can participate on boards on Zoom. Will make it easier to say yes to requests to serve.

I think that seniors will be more careful of what they attend in person in consideration of their health.

One of my favorite new traditions is sitting and watching Shabbat services with my toddler. [My child] loves watching 'Rabbi' sing, and it has been a meaningful addition to our household, especially since we do not do anything else Jewish regularly.

I have gotten used to being online for services and programming and have found so much online from other communities that I never would have found or done before, and I'm hoping I won't have to give that up. I don't see things going back to what they were before the crisis anytime soon—we may go back indoors in groups, but it won't be the same and perhaps it shouldn't be the same. Things weren't perfect and I hope the community...look[s] at itself and make[s] reforms to the way we do things.

Increasing Participation in Jewish Life

One hundred forty respondents cited specific ways they think either that the experience of the pandemic has enhanced their participation in Jewish life or that they anticipate participating more after the pandemic ends. Most of these comments addressed the increased options for engagement from online programming or the anticipation of returning to more active in-person engagement once it is safe to do so. Some noted that the Jewish community's efforts to reach out during the pandemic stimulated their interest in being more participative once the pandemic ends.

This has served as an introspective opportunity for many of us... Overall, the Jewish community, led by both progressives and traditionalists (like Chabad) have been very visible and reliably reaching out in word and deed. So, I will be more [active in Jewish life] now than I was when I first came to Kansas City.

When we moved [to Kansas City], one goal I had was to find a synagogue we could join. However, by the time we were settled in, the pandemic struck and so that never happened... I hope that now the pandemic is getting under control, we can find that opportunity.

Decreasing Participation in Jewish Life

Sixty-six respondents cited specific ways they think the experience of the pandemic has caused them to participate less in Jewish life in the short term, will cause their participation to decline even after the pandemic ends, or will affect others' level of engagement.

It might be difficult for the community to come back together in person right away. It may take several years.

Before COVID-19, I was convinced we as a family needed to be part of a congregation, but over the last 15 months or so, I am less convinced... Finding community is difficult, but I do not feel our former congregation did a good job of fostering it either. We have found it hard to have the same community as before and are not sure if it will return at all, especially as we feel more distant.

I am afraid that people will stop supporting the brick-and-mortar Jewish centers, as more participation is occurring worldwide over Zoom. No need to join a shul if you can attend services throughout the country without having to pay anything.

Uncertainty about the Future of Jewish Life

Fifty-four respondents said they were uncertain of what their future engagement in the Jewish community will be or what Jewish communal life will look in Greater Kansas City after the pandemic ends. In most cases, respondents indicated they simply did not know what would happen, but several noted that they were in a time in their lives when medical or transportation issues might make them think about participating less in the organized Jewish community. Combined with the ongoing threat of the pandemic, they are now waiting to hear it is safe to return to their old way of life before making any decisions.

I think it will be an adjustment to return to normalcy. Being in groups, not wearing masks, etc., will be anxiety-provoking.

I keep imagining kiddush lunches and other Jewish event food buffets being different.

Depending on what is occurring at [our synagogue] and the safety of the atmosphere, we might become more involved.

Hopefully, life will go back to what it was before Covid. But we still need to keep protecting ourselves, like we have done during [the pandemic].

Our life was very centered on the synagogue. Not sure how that is going to turn around in the next year. VERY nervous about congregating with large groups.

CHAPTER 11. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Greater Kansas City Jewish community has experienced some growth and significant changes since its last comprehensive population study was conducted in 1985. The area's low cost of living and its reputation as a good place to raise a family are reflected in the large proportion of Jewish households who have moved to the area in the past decade and drive much of the Jewish community's growth. Although the Jewish community's growth is intertwined with secular and economic trends, the ways in which the Jewish community responds to the needs of area Jewish residents will determine the number of Jewishly engaged individuals and the ways in which they participate in Jewish life.

Many community members express satisfaction with the quality of Jewish life in Greater Kansas City and its abundant opportunities for engagement. Many describe the community as tightly knit; some say it feels more like an extended family. Yet others find the community's institutions unwelcoming or too expensive, and some say the community's closeness makes it difficult for newcomers to find a comfortable niche into which to integrate themselves.

Jewish households in Greater Kansas City tend to be more highly educated and affluent than the broader community, but there are many who struggle financially—a proportion likely inflated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Like many Jewish communities, the Greater Kansas City Jewish community did not have all the resources it needed to offer all desired programs and services even before the pandemic, and many households could not afford to participate in Jewish communal life. The community will have to set priorities to ensure that all members of the community who wish to participate in Jewish life have affordable and accessible opportunities for engagement, while simultaneously navigating the pandemic's unprecedented challenges.

In that spirit, and based on the responses of the 989 Jewish households residing in Greater Kansas City who completed the survey, we have identified several implications and recommendations for using this study's results to enhance local Jewish life.

Reach beyond the historic geographic core of the community. Although the distribution of the Jewish population of Greater Kansas City between Kansas and Missouri appears to be similar to what it was in 1985, there are some indicators of a population shift within the region. Although 60% of all Jewish individuals in Greater Kansas City live in the High-Density Suburbs, only about half of children ages 0-17 (49%) or adults ages 18-39 (51%) live in this region. Similarly, although only 19% of all Jewish individuals in Greater Kansas City live in the Other Suburbs region, 28% of children ages 0-17 and 28% of adults ages 40-54 live in this region. There are also clusters of Jewish adults ages 18-39 and 55-64 in the City region, particularly within the city limits of Kansas City, Missouri. The majority of Jewish institutions in Greater Kansas City are still in the High-Density Suburbs, but Jewish infrastructure is growing in the City region. To maintain the growth in this region, the community must continue to invest in expanding its programs and services in the city. But the

community must also consider how to improve services in underserved neighborhoods that have traditionally not been home to large numbers of Jewish households.

Support core organizations, but also promote alternative options for engagement. The Kansas City Jewish community is fortunate to have a strong Federation and JCC, thriving Jewish schools, a growing Chabad network, and many prominent synagogues. These institutions are collectively the educational, religious, cultural, philanthropic, and social heart of the community. Yet only 39% of Jewish households belong to any congregation, and only 27% belong to a local Jewish organization other than a congregation or JCC. Additionally, many respondents indicated that they could not find activities or programs offered by Jewish organizations that interested them, that they could not afford to participate in programs, or that their background or beliefs might leave them excluded from community organizations. Communal organizations are doing a very good job of reaching members of the community who are interested in their offerings, can afford them, and feel welcome in Jewish institutions, but approximately half of Jewish adults in the community have little to nothing to do with the organized Jewish community. The community must continue to serve the needs and interests of the half of the community that are already engaged with their institutions, but also find ways to appeal to those in the half of the community that are not engaged in Jewish communal life but might be interested in participating if they could find their niche.

Reach out to interfaith families. Almost no interfaith families in Greater Kansas City feel very connected to the local Jewish community or to any online Jewish community. Interfaith families include 40% of all children in Jewish households in the area, a proportion that is likely to rise as the intermarriage rate increases. Of these children, 49% are being raised Jewish in any way—35% exclusively Jewish and 14% Jewish and in another faith. This estimate lags behind the national average of 69% and represents both a significant challenge and an opportunity for the Greater Kansas City Jewish community. Of the remaining 51% of children of interfaith families, 23% are being raised in no religion, 22% have parents who have not determined how to raise them, and only 5% are being raised exclusively in another religion. Research on interfaith families and their children suggests that some of these children may embrace their Jewish identity in adulthood (e.g., on a Birthright Israel trip),²⁴ but the single best predictor that they will identify as Jews when they are grown is enrollment in high-quality Jewish educational programming—such as schools, camps, and youth groups—when they are children.²⁵ Convincing intermarried parents to enroll their children in Jewish educational programs requires a strong investment in efforts to attract interfaith families to communal programs and events and clear communication that these families are a valued part of the Jewish community.

Be sensitive to differences of resources and backgrounds. The Jewish community of Greater Kansas City is proud of its openness to people from all walks of life and backgrounds, yet there are many members of the community who have trouble finding their place. Many respondents complained about significant financial barriers to participation in communal organizations. Others feel unwelcome because they fear their religious observance or political beliefs fall outside the communal norm. Some consider their lack of Jewish knowledge to be a significant barrier to increased participation. Newcomers have difficulty breaking into longstanding social circles and struggle to learn the history and traditions that make the Greater Kansas City Jewish community unique. The community must find ways to integrate everyone who wants to participate in the community, regardless of their background, financial resources, beliefs, or Judaic knowledge.

Address Covid-related anxiety, but maintain access even for those who cannot return to a pre-pandemic “normal.” This survey was conducted at a time when vaccines to protect against COVID-19 had just become available to the general populace but before most people were able to be vaccinated. Across the United States, many Jewish organizations that had shut their doors in 2020 to help prevent the spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus were reopening with varying safety measures in place—limited capacity, vaccine requirements, mask requirements, enhanced ventilation, and other measures intended to protect the community. Yet as this report is being finalized in February 2022, seven months after the survey closed, approximately 53% of the population in Kansas and 56% of the population in Missouri is fully vaccinated,²⁶ and public health efforts to contain the virus remain contentious. In this context, it is not surprising that one-in-five Jewish adults in Greater Kansas City cited the pandemic as a barrier to their participation in Jewish communal life. It will be years before the Jewish community can know the full impact of the pandemic, but in the interim, the community must continue to do what it can reassure its members of their safety in Jewish spaces and to provide access to those who are at high risk from the virus and are unable to join programs and events in person.

These conclusions and recommendations emerge from data collected systematically between April and July 2021. This study is part of a long tradition of using social science to assess the size, character, interests, needs, and concerns of a local Jewish community to help the community plan for its future. The Greater Kansas City Jewish community has invested significant resources in improving its programming, expanding its outreach to diverse segments of the population, and meeting the needs of its people. We hope that this snapshot of the community will stimulate a discussion about how best to enhance the community’s great strengths, meet its challenges, and plan for its future.

NOTES

¹ 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.

² In addition to the two community studies described here, a 2008 study provided a demographic snapshot of the Jewish households in the database of the Jewish Federation of Greater Kansas City, but did not account for the Jewish households not in the database.

³ The study describes a total population of approximately 19,600 people living in Jewish households but does not specify how many of them are Jewish. However, the study did indicate that there were several hundred non-Jewish spouses in Jewish households, and as the study pre-dated the Reform movement's decision on patrilineal descent, it is likely that children of non-Jewish women in Jewish households would not have been counted as Jews.

⁴ The 1985 study differentiated between the estimated 19,100 Jews and 3,000 non-Jews living in Jewish households in the Kansas City area.

⁵ Aronson, J.K., et al. (2020). *Building resilient Jewish communities: A Jewish response to the Coronavirus crisis*. Waltham, MA: Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies, Brandeis University.

⁶ U.S. Census, American Community Survey 2019 1-year estimates.

⁷ Pew Research Center, "Jewish Americans in 2020" (Washington D.C.: Pew Research Center, 2021).

⁸ Pew Research Center, "Jewish Americans in 2020."

⁹ Pew Research Center, "Jewish Americans in 2020."

¹⁰ Pew Research Center, "Jewish Americans in 2020."

¹¹ See also Aronson, J.K., et al. (2018). A new approach to understanding contemporary Jewish engagement. *Contemporary Jewry*, 39, 91–113.

¹² Pew Research Center, "Jewish Americans in 2020."

¹³ The head of household is the oldest Jewish person who is married/partnered, with two exceptions: First, if the respondent is married/partnered and Jewish, the head of household is the respondent, even if their (Jewish) spouse is older. Second, if no one is married/partnered, the head of household is the oldest Jewish person.

¹⁴ It is impossible to determine the degree to which the COVID-19 pandemic affected this estimate, but it is likely that this number is somewhat higher than it would have been in pre-pandemic times.

¹⁵ See Czeisler, M.E., et al. (2020). Mental health, substance abuse, and suicidal ideation during the COVID-19 pandemic—United States, June 24–30, 2020. *MMWR. Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, 69(32), 1049–1057. For more information about the initial impact of the pandemic in the Jewish community, see Aronson, J.K., et al. (2022). The impact of the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic on US Jewry: A preliminary assessment. In A. Dashefsky & I.M. Sheskin (eds.), *American Jewish Year Book 2020*, chapter 3. Cham, Switzerland: Springer Nature.

¹⁶ Aronson et al., "The impact of the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic on US Jewry."

¹⁷ We believe it is likely we overestimated the proportion of college graduates among Jewish adults in Greater Kansas City. The 95% confidence interval around the estimate of the proportion of the population with at least a bachelor's degree ranges from 79% to 91. However, evidence from the American Jewish Population Project suggests the true rate is

likely in the 60s. In any survey, despite the best efforts of researchers to minimize bias, there is always a chance that a small number of estimates may be inaccurate by random chance as a result of collecting data from a sample of the population rather than each and every individual. This is the only estimate we are reporting that we believe to be implausible, but we have chosen to be transparent in reporting it.

¹⁸ Pew Research Center, “Jewish Americans in 2020.”

¹⁹ See <https://aspe.hhs.gov/topics/poverty-economic-mobility/poverty-guidelines/prior-hhs-poverty-guidelines-federal-register-references/2021-poverty-guidelines#thresholds>

²⁰ According to the US Federal Reserve, in 2018, 39% of US households could not cover a \$400 emergency expense. <https://www.federalreserve.gov/publications/2019-economic-well-being-of-us-households-in-2018-dealing-with-unexpected-expenses.htm>

²¹ Pew Research Center, “Jewish Americans in 2020.”

²² Streaming services is problematic for many traditional Jews, particularly on Shabbat and Jewish holidays. Accordingly, streaming is typically offered by non-Orthodox synagogues.

²³ Pew Research Center, “Jewish Americans in 2020.”

²⁴ See Saxe, L., et al. (2017). *Beyond 10 days: Parents, gender, marriage, and the long-term impact of Birthright Israel*. Waltham, MA: Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies, Brandeis University.

²⁵ See, for example, Shain, M., et al. (2019). *Beyond welcoming: Engaging intermarried couples in Jewish life*. Waltham, MA: Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies, Brandeis University; Sasson, T., et al. (2017). Millennial children of intermarriage: Religious upbringing, identification, and behavior among children of Jewish and non-Jewish parents. *Contemporary Jewry*, 37, 99-123.

²⁶ As of February 7, 2022. Source: <https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/>

