

2019

# CINCINNATI JEWISH COMMUNITY STUDY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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# Executive Summary

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For the 2019 Greater Cincinnati Jewish Community Study, the Maurice and Marilyn Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies (CMJS) and the Steinhardt Social Research Institute (SSRI) at Brandeis University employed innovative state-of-the-art methods to create a comprehensive portrait of the characteristics, attitudes, and behaviors of present-day Greater Cincinnati Jewry. The study also provides national and historical context by considering trends and data in the United States and where possible, comparisons to Greater Cincinnati in 2008.

This study is intended to be a first step in identifying communal trends; generating questions to explore; and determining strategies, programs, and policies to support and enhance Jewish life in the area.

Specifically, the study seeks 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, health and economic well-being, and other sociodemographic characteristics
- Measure participation in community programs and institutional Judaism and understand reasons for participation
- Understand the multifaceted cultural, communal, and religious expressions of Judaism that constitute Jewish engagement
- Assess attitudes toward Israel and Judaism

## Demographics

The 2019 Cincinnati Jewish Community Study estimates that there are 18,900 Jewish households in Greater Cincinnati. These households include 32,100 Jewish individuals and a total of approximately 48,200 adults and children. Approximately 2.7% of the 673,000 households in the catchment area include at least one Jewish adult.

- From 2008 to 2019, the number of individuals living in Jewish households increased by about 24%, and the number of households increased by 36%. During the same period, the number of Jewish individuals increased by 6%.
- An increase of 73% in the number of non-Jewish adults in Jewish households reflects the large number of interfaith households in the Greater Cincinnati Jewish community.
- The mean and median age of local Jewish adults is 49, which is one year below the median age of the national Jewish population.
- Twelve percent of Jewish households have a member who identifies as LGBTQ. Five percent of households include someone who is a person of color, Hispanic, or Latino. Four percent of households include an Israeli citizen. Nine percent of households include someone who is Russian speaking or was raised in a Russian-speaking home.
- Almost half of Jewish adults were raised in the Greater Cincinnati area, including 31% who lived in Greater Cincinnati their entire lives and 16% who were raised in Cincinnati, left, and returned. Of those who moved to the area or left and returned, more than half moved for a job and one third moved to be close to family.
- Thirty-one percent of Jewish households include a child under age 18.

## Geography

The Jewish population of Greater Cincinnati resides in four regions: Urban, Central and East, Outer Suburbs, and Outlying Areas. See Chapter 2 of main report for definitions of the regions.

- The highest proportion of Jewish households live in the Urban region (33%) and the Central and East region (29%). The smallest share of Jewish households live in the Outlying Areas region.
- The largest share of Jewish individuals reside in the Central and East region.
- The largest share of Jewish children (43%) live in the Central and East region, while the largest share of Jewish young adults (46%) live in the Urban region.
- Compared to the overall Greater Cincinnati population, Jewish households are more concentrated in the Urban region and the Central and East region and are much less concentrated in the Outlying Areas.

## Inmarriage, Inter-marriage, and Jewish Children

Among all Jewish households in Greater Cincinnati, 76% include a couple who is married or partnered. About one third (31%) of Jewish households include minor children.

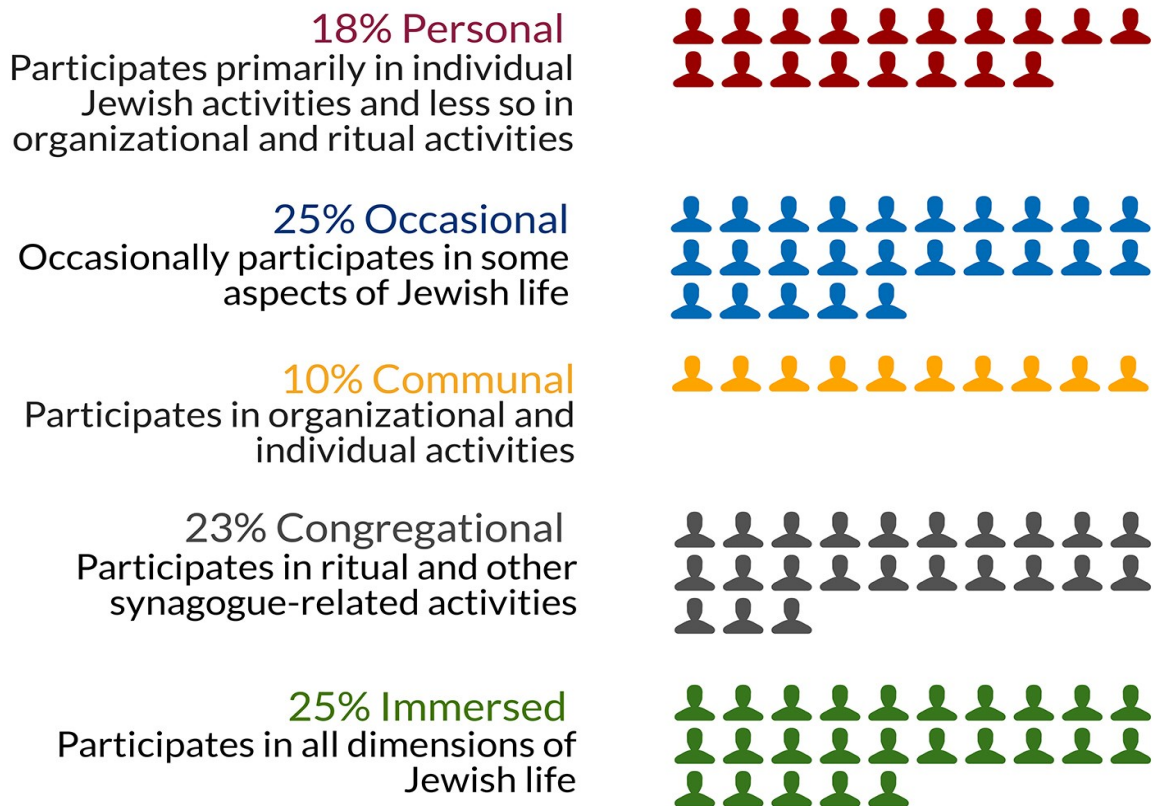
- The individual intermarriage rate, or the proportion of married/partnered Jewish adults with a non-Jewish spouse, is 55%. By comparison, among US Jews nationally, 44% have a non-Jewish spouse, and among Jews in the Midwest, 49% have a non-Jewish spouse.
- Fifty-nine percent of children are being raised by intermarried parents.
- Among those in interfaith relationships, 50% find the local Jewish community somewhat or very supportive to interfaith couples.

## Jewish Engagement

Cincinnati Jewish adults have multiple avenues for expressing their Jewish identities.

- The largest single Jewish denomination is Reform, including 35% of Jewish adults, however, 41% of Jewish adults do not identify with any Jewish denomination.
- Four-in-five Cincinnati Jewish adults say that Judaism is part of their daily life, and 28% say it is very much part of their daily life.
- A typology of five patterns of Jewish behavior illustrates that Jewish adults participate in individual, organizational, and ritual aspects of Jewish life (Figure ES.1).

Figure ES.1. Jewish engagement groups



## Jewish Children and Jewish Education

Among the 10,200 children who live in Greater Cincinnati Jewish households, there are 5,700 children (56% of all children) who are being raised Jewish in some way, either by religion, as secular or cultural Jews, or as Jewish and another religion.

- One third of children (36%) are being raised with no religion or have parents who have not yet made a decision regarding the child's religion. For some parents, this response means they are not at all interested in Jewish life. For other parents, although they participate in Jewish life, they have chosen to describe the way they raised their children in terms of religion as "no religion" or "not yet decided," rather than as cultural Jews. None of these children are enrolled in Jewish education. More than half of the children whose parents have not yet decided how to raise them are under age six.
- Twenty-eight percent of children being raised Jewish in some way are enrolled in formal Jewish education.
- Eighteen percent of Jewish children who are not yet in kindergarten are enrolled in a Jewish preschool program. Twenty-one percent of Jewish children in grades K-12 are enrolled in supplemental schools, and 10% of Jewish children are enrolled in day schools.
- Since 2008, enrollment has increased for Jewish preschool, declined for supplemental school, and increased for day school.
- In summer 2018, 15% of Jewish children in grades K-12 attended Jewish day camp, and 15% attended an overnight Jewish camp.
- Nineteen percent of Jewish children in grades 6-12 participated in a Jewish youth group.
- Twenty-five percent of Jewish students in grades 11 and 12 traveled to Israel on a peer trip.

## Synagogue and Jewish Ritual

Participation in synagogue-based activities exceeds membership in synagogues.

- Twenty-eight percent of Jewish households are members of a synagogue or other worship community.
- Almost all (91%) of synagogue-member households indicate that they belong to at least one "brick-and-mortar" congregation in Greater Cincinnati, while 6% belong to Chabad, 5% to an independent minyan or congregation, and 3% to a synagogue outside Greater Cincinnati.
- Sixty-two percent of Jewish adults attended services at least once in the past year, and 18% attended a service monthly or more. Almost half of Jewish adults (46%) attended a High Holiday service.
- In a typical year, 63% of Jewish adults attended a Passover seder, and 82% of Jewish adults lit Hanukkah candles.

## Jewish Organizational Life

Greater Cincinnati households have multiple opportunities to participate in Jewish life, whether through Jewish organizations or individually.

- Although only 9% of Jewish adults belong to a Mayerson JCC member household, 28% of Jewish adults have participated in one or more JCC programs.
- While 11% of households belong to a Jewish organization, 59% of adults attended one or more programs sponsored by a Jewish organization in the past year. The most popular activities were social programs and religious programs (aside from religious services).
- One third (35%) of Jewish adults volunteered with a Jewish organization, and 55% donated to a Jewish organization in the past year.

## Community Connections

Jewish adults in Greater Cincinnati feel a part of the Jewish community, but many desire a greater connection.

- Seventy percent of Jewish adults feel at least a little connected to the local Jewish community, and 15% feel very connected.
- Eighty-eight percent of Jewish adults feel at least a little connected to the worldwide Jewish community, and 30% feel very connected.
- Almost half (47%) of Jewish adults feel that their current level of connection is just right, but almost half of Jewish adults would like to be more connected to the local Jewish community.
- Among those who desire more connection to the Jewish community, almost three quarters (71%) of these individuals feel that not knowing many people in the Jewish community is a condition that limits their participation.

## Connections to Israel

Cincinnati's Jewish young adults have traveled to Israel at higher rates and feel more strongly connected to Israel than their corresponding age group on the national level.

- Among Jewish adults, 52% have been to Israel at least once, a larger share than among all US Jews (43%). Thirty-two percent of Jewish adults feel very connected to Israel, similar to the attachment of all US Jews to Israel (30% are very attached).
- Among Jewish young adults (ages 22 to 34), 72% have been to Israel, compared to 45% nationally. Forty-two percent of Cincinnati's Jewish young adults are very connected to Israel, compared to 23% of US Jews of the same age.
- Eighty percent of Jewish adults sought out news about Israel at least once in the past year, and 28% sought out news frequently.
- Seven percent of households donated to a pro-Israel organization such as AIPAC, JNF, AJC, or Hadassah.

## Financial Conditions

Among Greater Cincinnati Jewish households, 11% describe their standard of living as “just getting along,” a possible indication of economic vulnerability, 1% said they are “nearly poor,” and less than 1% indicated they are “poor.” Forty-nine percent of Jewish households describe their standard of living as “living reasonably comfortably,” 31% as “very comfortably,” and 9% as “prosperous.”

- Single households are more likely to describe themselves as “just getting along,” “nearly poor,” or “poor,” compared to married households.
- Financial insecurity, indicating a risk of poverty, is reflected in the lack of financial resources for emergency or future expenses. More than one quarter (28%) of households do not have enough funds to cover three months of expenses were they to face an unexpected loss of income.
- Fourteen percent of Jewish adults, including some already with jobs, are looking for work.
- Five percent of Jewish households report that finances make it difficult for them to participate fully in Jewish life.

## Health Conditions and Social Services

Seventeen percent of Jewish households include at least one person whose work, schooling, or general activities are limited by some sort of health issue, special need, or disability.

- Jews ages 75 and older face more health limitations than did younger Jews.
- In 12% of Cincinnati’s Jewish households, someone is providing care for a close relative or friend on a regular basis (aside from routine childcare).
- Ten percent of Jews younger than age 75 indicate that they have parents living in an assisted living facility in Greater Cincinnati, and 11% have a parent in a senior community elsewhere.
- Eight percent of households report that health issues make it difficult for them or someone in their household to participate fully in Jewish life.