

A Blueprint for Our Future

SAN DIEGO
JEWISH COMMUNITY STUDY
SUMMARY REPORT



Acknowledgements

On behalf of the study leadership team, we are excited to share this summary of our full report, **San Diego Jewish Community Study: A Blueprint for Our Future**. As leaders committed to building a thriving community, we know the best planning decisions are made through meaningful collaboration using valid data. Through our collaboration, we have aspired to stimulate a renewed orientation toward research-driven decision-making.

We hope that our findings, summarized here, will provide the tools we need to chart a clear course for the vibrant, welcoming, and inclusive community we seek to build together. The collaborative multi-year effort to bring our organizations' shared vision for this study to fruition was spearheaded by managing consultant, Shana Hazan, and guided by the tremendous work of our Core Team: Ollie Benn, Chris Edwards, Jessica Kort, Darren Schwartz, and Carole Yellen.

We would like to thank our research team, which brings together two preeminent research institutions: Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies (CMJS) at Brandeis University and NORC at the University of Chicago. This team was led by Dr. Janet Aronson and Professor Leonard Saxe at Brandeis University, and Dr. David Dutwin and Dr. Zachary Seeskin at NORC. This study would not have been possible without all of the local individual donors who gave generously to support this effort. We thank them and are grateful for their belief

in the power of data-driven decisionmaking and the potential of this study. We also thank the Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation for their support of our work to understand the racial and ethnic diversity of our community and to collect data about financial security.

For us, and we hope for you, **A Blueprint for Our Future** is a starting point for introspection, deeper conversation, and collaborative community planning. While our study is complete, our community's work to translate data into action is now just beginning. As you read, we hope you will consider how these findings might shape the decisions you make individually and those we make together to build a thriving Jewish community in San Diego.

In partnership and in community,
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Guiding Principles and Methodology

If we could create a portrait of the Jewish community in Greater San Diego, what story would it tell? What would the community look like? What traditions would be bringing people together? What are common perspectives, and how are these evolving over time?

A team of researchers and community organizations sought the answers to these and other questions when they reached out to Jewish households in the Greater San Diego area to ask about their perspectives and day-to-day lives.

This summary report reviews the findings of *2022 San Diego Jewish Community Study: A Blueprint for Our Future*. It is centered around the study team's four Guiding Principles:

1. Gather actionable and usable data that sheds light on what Jews in San Diego County and Temecula think and feel.
2. Recognize the diversity of the Jewish community and use an inclusive lens when recognizing Jewish identity.
3. Ensure full representation of Jews that are living on the margins/fringes and struggling to make ends meet.
4. Identify and understand Jews that are disengaged and disconnected from Jewish life.

Note that for simplicity, when we refer to "Greater San Diego" or the "San Diego Jewish community" in this report, we are referring to both San Diego County and Temecula. Throughout the report, we have included illustrative quotations from study participants.



PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The goal of the study was to create a snapshot of today's San Diego Jewish community that can be used by community organizations to design programs and policies that support and enhance the quality of Jewish life. Valid data are essential to effective decision-making, allocation of resources, strategic priorities, community support, robust participation, and outreach.

METHODOLOGY

This study is based on an analysis of data collected from 2,104 Jewish households in Greater San Diego between June and September 2022. Survey respondents were randomly selected from all households in Greater San Diego, including households that appear on Jewish organization lists and households that are not known to any Jewish organization. Survey responses were statistically weighted to make them representative of all Jewish households in San Diego.

For more information, you can download the full report on sdjewishblueprint.org.



Action Planning Questions

Community organizations who participated in the San Diego Jewish Community Study posed Action Planning questions that have been embedded throughout the report. The purpose is to spark thought and conversation about Jewish life. The study data provide some initial insights, and all are springboards for community dialogue and exploration.

Demographic Overview

There are approximately 56,200 Jewish households in the San Diego Jewish community. These households include 134,100 individuals, of whom 100,700 are Jewish. The Jewish population comprises 3.2% of San Diego County, and Jewish households make up 4.8% of the households.

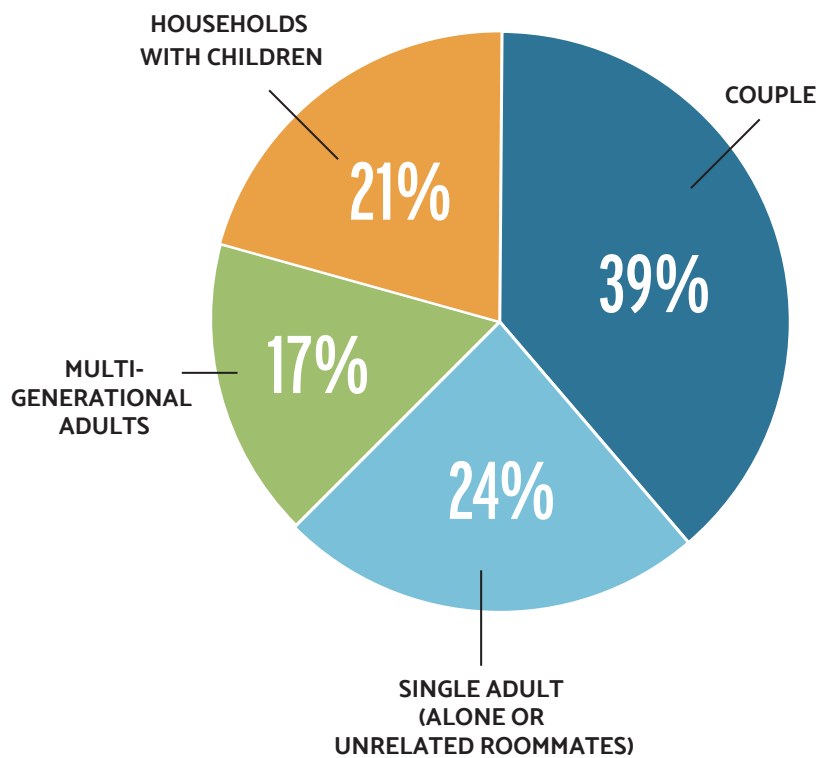
The growth of the San Diego Jewish population is similar to the growth of the overall County population. Since 2003, when the last Jewish Community Study was conducted, the Jewish population increased 13%. During a similar time period, the population of San Diego County increased 14%.¹

JEWISH INDIVIDUAL POPULATION CHANGE

POPULATION	2003	2022	% CHANGE
JEWISH SAN DIEGO	89,000	100,700	+13%

POPULATION	2000	2021	% CHANGE
SAN DIEGO COUNTY	2,813,900	3,194,800	+14%

HOUSEHOLDS WITH OR WITHOUT CHILDREN

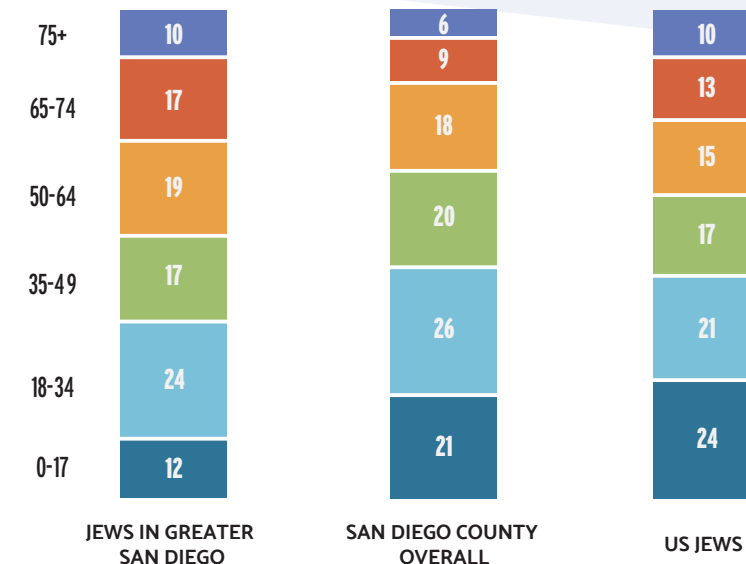


How can community members uplift one another in finding a sense of purpose and wellbeing at all different life stages?

Most Jewish households are made up of couples and single adults without children. Fewer than a quarter are households with children.

¹ Sources: (1) Ukeles Associates, "Demographic Study of the San Diego Jewish Population," and (2) U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates.

AGE DISTRIBUTION: JEWISH INDIVIDUALS AND OVERALL POPULATION (%)

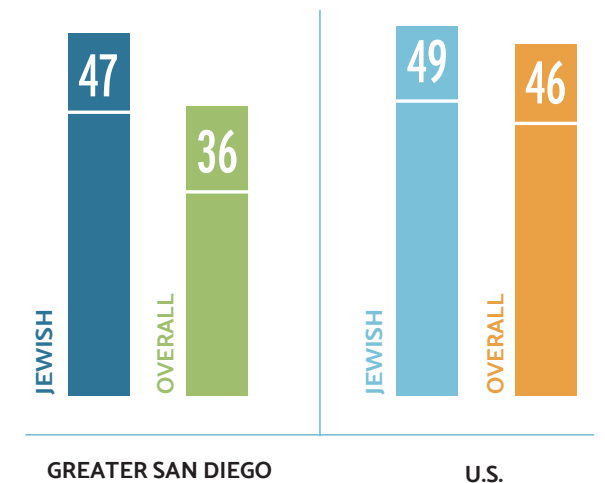


The San Diego Jewish community has a larger share of older adults than the County overall: While 9% of all residents are ages 65 to 74, 17% of Jewish individuals are ages 65 to 74.

Only 12% of Jews in San Diego are under age 18 – compared to 21% of San Diego County and 24% of U.S. Jews.²

MEDIAN AGE: JEWISH AND OVERALL POPULATION (%)

The San Diego Jewish community is older than the general population. The median age of all Jewish individuals in San Diego is about ten years older than that of the general population. Nationwide, the median age of all Jewish individuals is also older than that of the general population.² However, a nationwide survey found that the median age of all U.S. Jews has declined by about four years since 2013.³



DEFINITION OF JEWISH HOUSEHOLDS, ADULTS, AND CHILDREN

For purposes of this study, a Jewish household is defined as one that includes at least one Jewish adult. Jewish adults are defined as those who consider themselves Jewish in any way and either have a Jewish parent, were raised Jewish, or converted to Judaism. Non-Jewish adults either do not consider themselves to be Jewish or do not have a Jewish background. Children are classified based on whether their parents consider them to be Jewish.

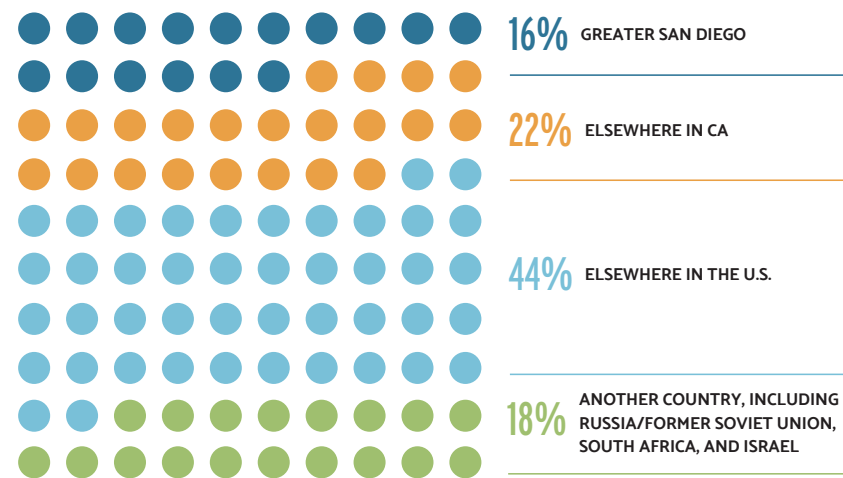
² Source: Age demographic statistics for San Diego County are based on U.S. Census Bureau, "2021 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates," 2021. Statistics for all United States Jews are from Pew Research Center Jewish Americans in 2020 (May 11, 2021). Retrieved from: <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2021/05/11/jewish-americans-in-2020/>

³ Source: Public Religion Research Institute. (2021). The 2020 Census of American Religion. Retrieved from: <https://www.prii.org/research/2020-census-of-american-religion>

More than half of Jewish newcomers to San Diego are young adults. Thirty percent of Jewish adults are relative newcomers to Greater San Diego, with 16% having lived in the area for five to nine years, and 14% having moved to the area within the past four years. More than half of these newcomers are under the age of 35. This points to an influx of younger adults.

Nearly one in five Jewish individuals identify with a racial identity other than white or as Hispanic. Six percent of all Jewish individuals identify as a person of color.

BREAKDOWN OF PLACE OF BIRTH FOR ALL JEWISH ADULTS IN SAN DIEGO



Four out of five Jewish adults were born in the United States. More than two-thirds of Jewish households (71%) include an adult with a parent or grandparent who was born in another country. Seventeen percent of Jewish households include an individual who was born outside of the United States.

ABOUT 4 IN 5 JEWISH ADULTS WERE BORN IN THE UNITED STATES

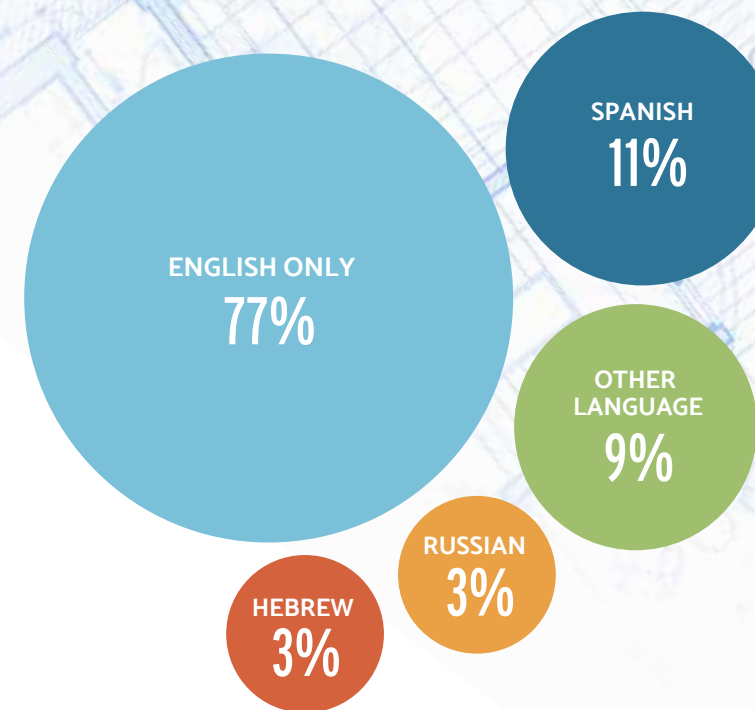


How can organizations adapt to serve both older adults and younger Jewish adults who are moving to San Diego? Are there ways to foster connections between them?

⁴ AARP recently launched a campaign to challenge stereotypes about what it means to age. More information about how older adults are disrupting aging, visit www.aarp.org/disrupt-aging

⁵ California Department of Aging. (2021). California Master Plan for Aging. Retrieved from: <https://mpa.aging.ca.gov/>

LANGUAGE SPOKEN REGULARLY AT HOME



In about one quarter of Jewish households, people speak a language other than English on a regular basis. People in about three-quarters (77%) of Jewish households speak English only.



OLDER ADULTS

Across the United States, older adults form a bedrock of volunteer supports and resources to their communities. Older adults are disrupting narratives about aging, whether this be by making career changes, adopting new healthy lifestyle habits, or finding new modes of creativity and self-expression.⁴ A safety net is needed to ensure all community members can achieve a sense of health and wellbeing at all life stages. The California Master Plan for Aging calls for communities to build a “California for all ages and abilities.” Five goals are put forward in the plan: (1) housing options for all ages, (2) access to health supports needed to remain in one’s community, (3) inclusion and equitable opportunities for participation, (4) supports and professional opportunities for caregivers, and (5) closing the age equity gap in economic security.⁵

HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS

Among Jewish adults ages 75 and older, 9% are Holocaust survivors or World War II refugees. Among all Jewish adults, 27% are descendants of a Holocaust victim, survivor, or World War II refugee.



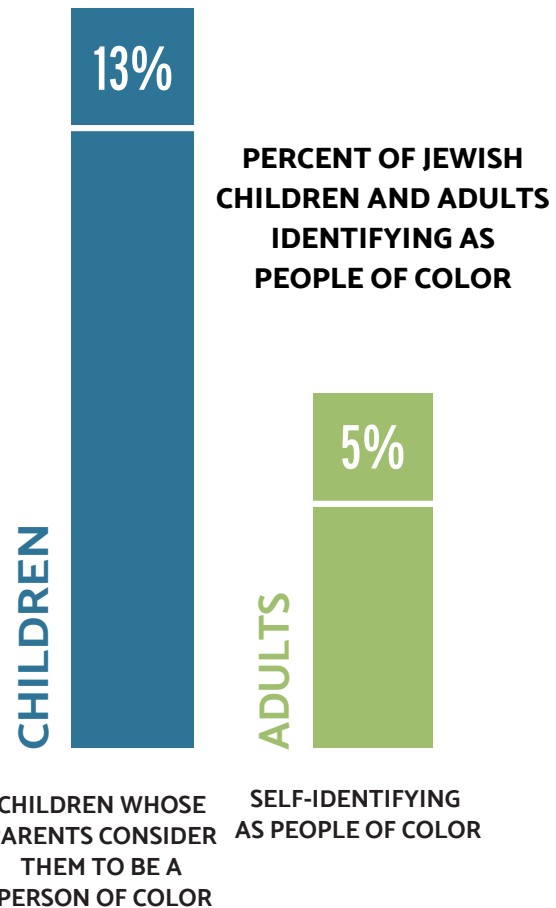
Stories of a Diverse Community

Study findings illustrate the story of a Jewish community that is diverse with regard to race/ethnicity, family, and denominational identities.

The San Diego Jewish community is becoming more racially and ethnically diverse. Across all Jewish households, 6% of individuals (adults and children) identify as people of color. Notably, the proportion of Jewish children whose parents identify them as people of color is higher than the proportion of Jewish adults who self-identify as people of color. This suggests that future generations will continue to be more multiracial and multiethnic.



How do we ensure that the programs and leadership of Jewish organizations reflect the diversity of the communities they serve?



Seventy-two percent of Jewish adults in San Diego are married or partnered. Half of those individuals have a non-Jewish partner or spouse. This is similar to national trends: Among all U.S. Jews who are legally married, 42% have a non-Jewish spouse.⁶

Half of Jewish adults in Greater San Diego do not identify with a denomination. Twenty-three percent identify as Reform; 15% as Conservative; 3% as Orthodox; and 9% some other denomination.

More inquiry is needed to understand the degree to which Jewish organizations have achieved diversity, equity, and inclusion among their staff, leaders, and members. This includes, for example, perceptions of inclusion among communities of color, LGBTQ+-identifying individuals, and those with disabilities or special needs.



How do we achieve equitable access and participation across diverse community groups?

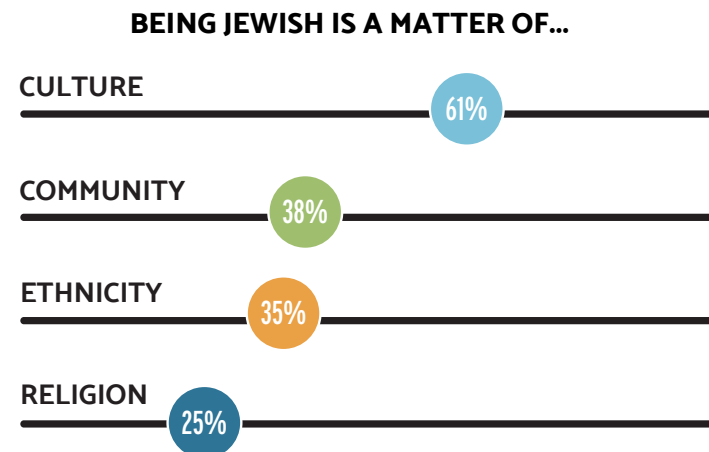
“THERE IS MORE TO DO TO MAKE ALL JEWISH SPACES AND EVENTS WELCOMING TO THE DIVERSE IDENTITIES OF OUR JEWISH COMMUNITY WHETHER CONSIDERING RACE, LGBTQ, ABILITY...LACK OF INCLUSIVITY ALSO GIVES POWER TO GATEKEEPERS WHO TRY TO SAY WHO IS ALLOWED TO CALL THEMSELVES A JEW. ”



⁶ Source: Pew Research Center. (May 11, 2021). Chapter 3: Marriage, Families, Children. *Jewish Americans in 2020*. Retrieved from: <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2021/05/11/marriage-families-and-children>

Jewish Attitudes and Perspectives

The vast majority of Jews in San Diego feel a sense of belonging to the Jewish people; 42% feel a great deal of belonging and 39% feel some sense of belonging. For most, being Jewish is a matter of culture. The majority of Jewish adults (61%) believe a great deal that being Jewish is a matter of culture. San Diego's Jewish adults feel less strongly that being Jewish is a matter of community, ethnicity, or religion.



Social justice arose as an important value for members of the San Diego Jewish community. Nearly all Jewish adults in San Diego agree that leading an ethical and moral life, remembering the Holocaust, working for justice and equality in society, and connecting to family and traditions are important or essential to being Jewish.

Concerns about social justice were frequently named among the issues that people say keep them up at night. Examples include:

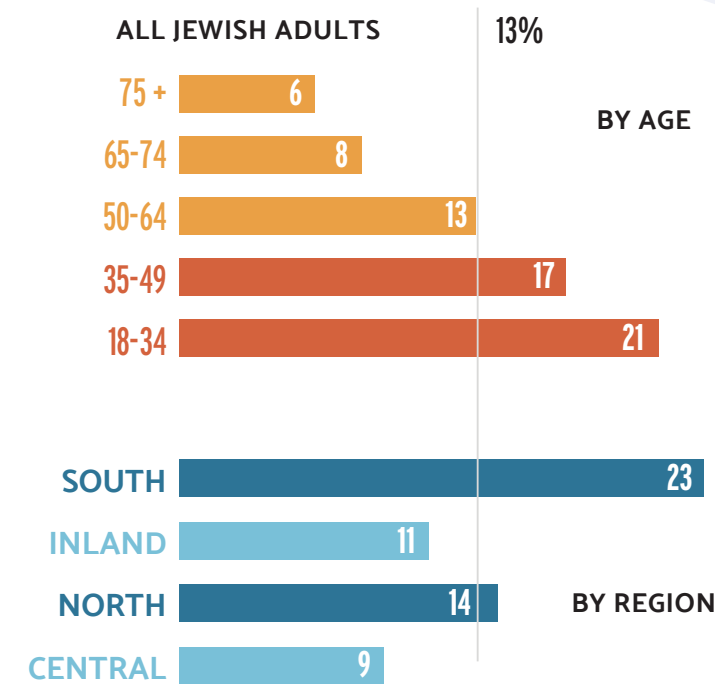
1. environment and climate change,
2. violence and gun control,
3. reproductive rights,
4. civil rights and voting rights, and
5. poverty, homelessness, and access to health care.

How do these attitudes and perspectives compare to your experience of Jewish community in San Diego? What are the differences?

"[THERE IS A] GENUINE CONCERN FOR THE WELLBEING OF JEWISH AND NON-JEWISH NEIGHBORS; CONCERNS FOR EQUAL RIGHTS, WOMEN'S RIGHTS, AND ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES."

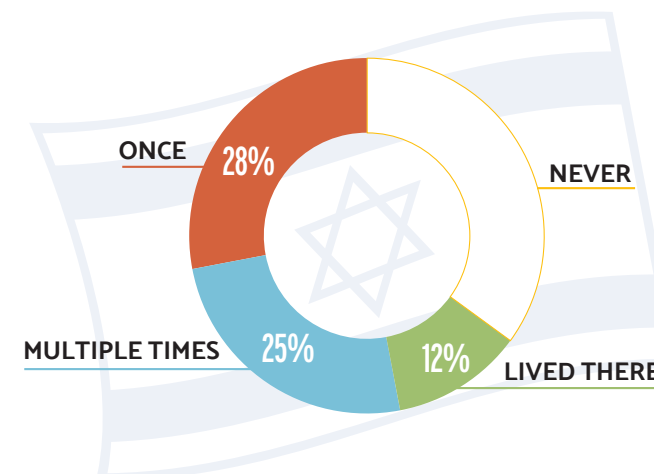
The majority of Jewish adults are very concerned about antisemitism around the world (70%) and in the United States (64%).

ADULTS REPORTING AN EXPERIENCE OF ANTISEMITISM (%)



Thirteen percent of Jewish adults report that they personally have experienced antisemitism in the past year. There were notable age differences in these experiences, with antisemitism most commonly reported among younger adults ages 18-34. They ranged in type and intensity from microaggressions to actual physical violence or threats.

65% OF JEWISH ADULTS TRAVELED TO ISRAEL. THEY TRAVELED...



Israel plays an important role in the Jewish identity of many Jewish adults in San Diego. The majority (65%) report feeling some level of emotional attachment to Israel, with 37% feeling somewhat attached and 28% feeling very attached. The majority (73%) of Jewish adults in San Diego strongly agree that Israel should exist as a refuge for the Jewish people, now and in the future.

Two-thirds of San Diego's Jewish adults have been to Israel. There is a strong correlation between emotional attachment to Israel and having traveled or lived there.

Jewish Engagement

Jewish engagement is a complex, multidimensional expression of Jewish identity. A common set of categories of Jewish affiliation is denomination. However, half of Jews in Greater San Diego do not affiliate with any particular denomination. We need new language to talk about how people engage in Jewish life.

This study identifies five patterns of engagement that are unique to the San Diego Jewish community. They differ in terms of the types of behaviors people engage in – the ways in which people spend their time and involve themselves in Jewish life. These patterns were labeled by the study team as occasional, cultural, holiday, involved, and immersed.

“SAN DIEGO HAS A ROBUST JEWISH COMMUNITY. EACH OF OUR ORGANIZATIONS SERVES AN IMPORTANT ROLE THAT MAKES OUR JEWISH COMMUNITY THRIVE.”

It’s interesting to note that in Greater San Diego, there are few differences across demographic groups in how people engage: For each of the five patterns of engagement, there is similar representation by age, household type, and region.

EXPRESSIONS OF JEWISH LIFE

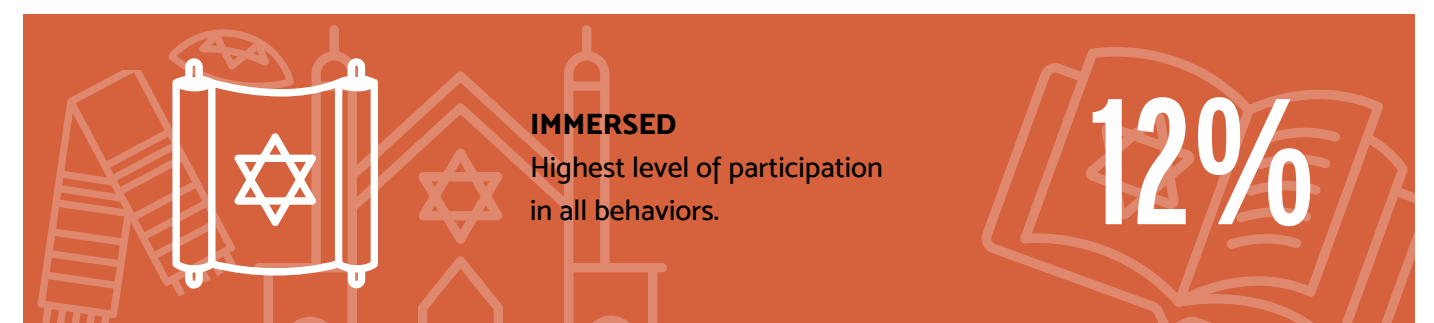
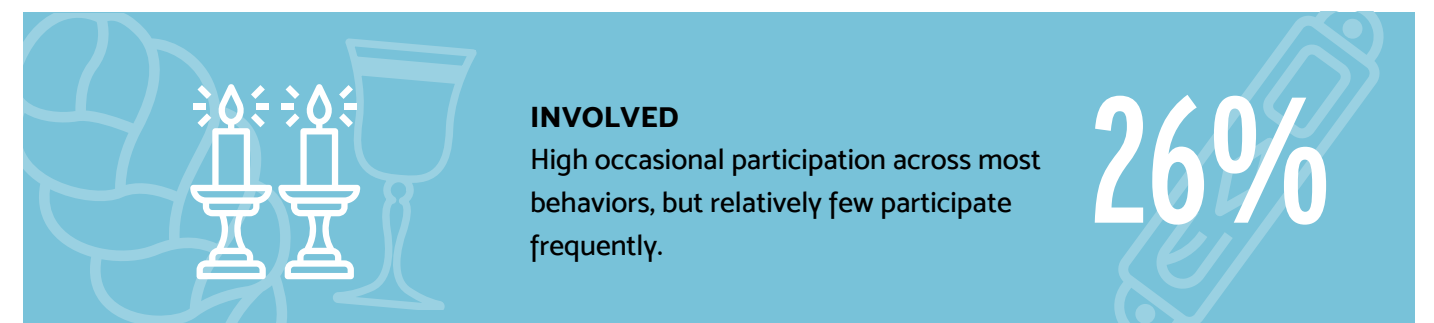
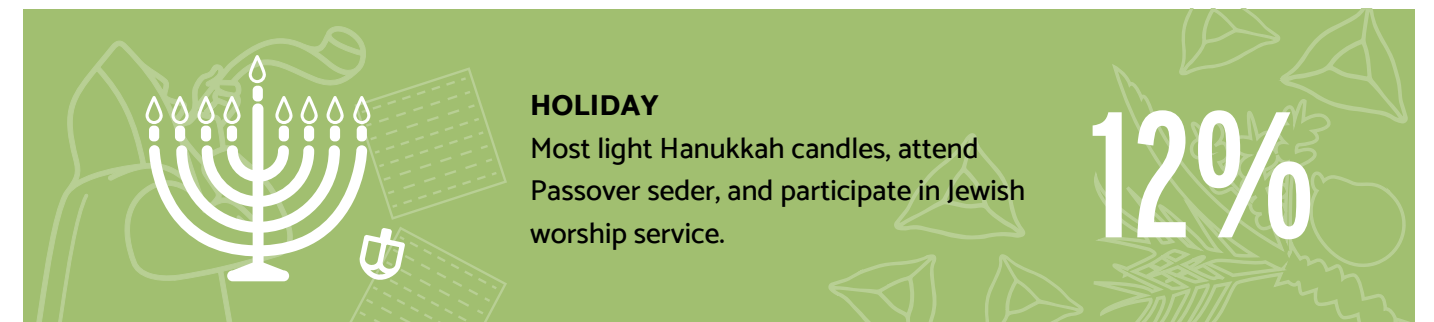
To illustrate the diversity of expressions of Jewish life in San Diego, each study participant was assigned to one of five patterns of engagement. These categories were identified using a statistical analysis of survey responses to questions about 20 different Jewish behaviors. Specifically, the team looked at what groups of behaviors tended to “cluster” together. The names given to the groups reflect the primary ways in which each group engages in Jewish life. While the analysis method was developed through prior research at Brandeis University, the patterns that arose from this study are unique to the San Diego Jewish community.



How is our understanding of the ways that people engage in Jewish life evolving? What are the different expressions of contemporary Jewish life?



INDEX OF JEWISH ENGAGEMENT



Community members attend religious services even if they are not members of congregations.

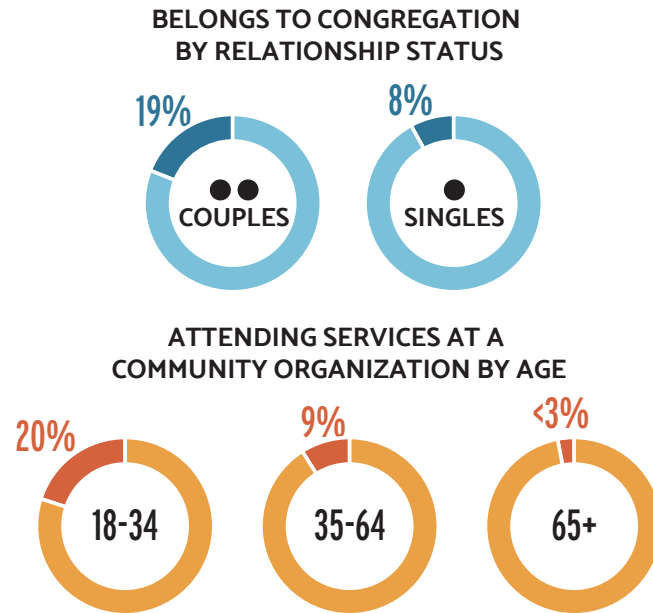
While 22% of Jewish adults currently belong to a congregation, 55% of Jewish adults attended a religious service at least once in the previous year. One quarter of those who are not congregation members attended a High Holidays service in 2021.

The ways people participate in congregations vary by relationship status and age.

Couples are more likely than single adults to belong to a congregation. Young adults attend services at community organizations more often than synagogues.

About half of service-going Jewish adults (52%) prefer to attend services in person. Another third are willing to participate in either online or in-person services.

LOCATION OF SERVICE BY AGE

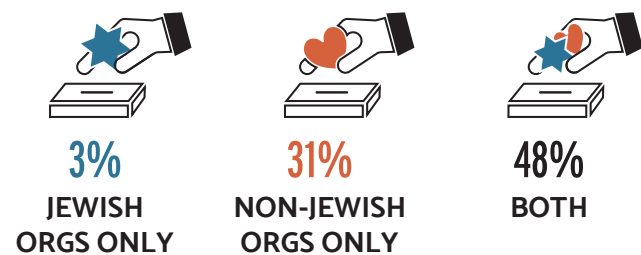


JEWISH VOLUNTEERISM AND PHILANTHROPY BENEFIT THE WIDER COMMUNITY

JEWISH ADULTS REPORTED THAT THEY VOLUNTEER FOR...



JEWISH ADULTS REPORTED THAT THEY DONATE TO...



More than half of San Diego Jewish adults ages 50 to 74 volunteer in their communities. More than 80% of households ages 35+ donate to philanthropic causes.

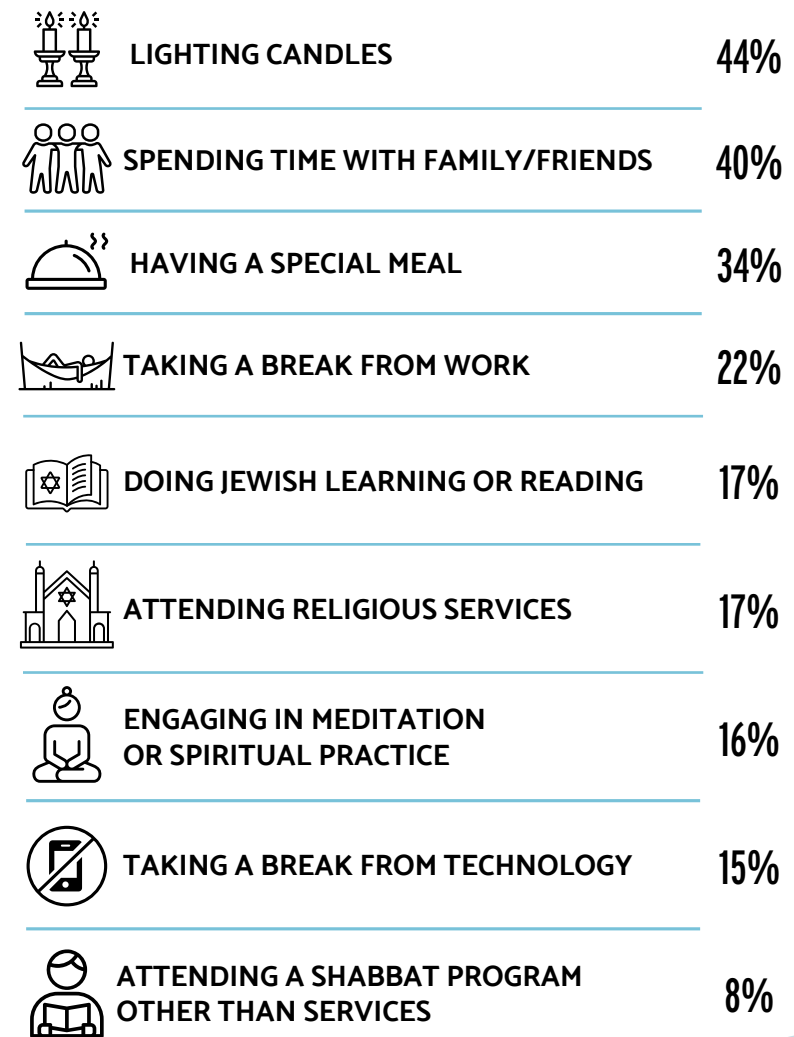
Jews in San Diego are very active in volunteerism and philanthropy, and these activities benefit both Jewish and non-Jewish organizations.

- Half of Jewish adults in the San Diego Jewish community volunteered for at least one organization or cause in the previous year.
- People from most Jewish households (82%) report making a charitable contribution in the past year.

Jews engage in a diverse array of rituals. About three-quarters of Jewish adults lit Hanukkah candles in 2021, over half participated in a Passover seder in 2022, and 40% fasted on Yom Kippur in 2021. Ten percent of Jewish adults keep kosher at home.

Just over half of Jewish adults marked Shabbat in some way during the previous year. The following are the percentages of all community members who participate in different Shabbat rituals.

COMMUNITY MEMBERS MARK SHABBAT BY...



Health and Economic Security

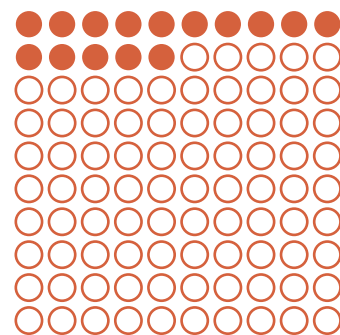
While one quarter of households describe their financial situation as well-off, 15% say they are financially struggling – meaning they cannot make ends meet or are just managing to make ends meet. Single adults are more likely than Jewish couples to experience financial hardship.

Community members report that financial hardship is affecting their ability to meet basic needs including rent, healthcare, food, and utilities. These basic needs represent areas where there are opportunities to continue to activate more resources.

Those who are financially struggling were more likely to report barriers to participation in Jewish life. About one quarter of this group feels unwelcome at Jewish activities, as compared to only 4% of those who are well off.

One quarter of Jewish households in San Diego include a member whose work, school, or activities are limited by a chronic health issue, special need, or disability. Among households who are financially struggling, this proportion increases to nearly half. Among financially struggling adults, 22% felt lonely often or all of the time in the previous week.

15 OUT OF 100 JEWISH COMMUNITY MEMBERS ARE STRUGGLING FINANCIALLY



9%

of households reported earning less than 250% of Federal Poverty Level (2023). That's less than \$33,975 for individual and \$57,575 for a family of three.

19-22%

of households reported earning under 80% of San Diego area median income, a measure of financial wellbeing that accounts for cost of living in San Diego.⁷



What are the financial barriers that people face and how can community members be empowered to overcome them?

⁷ This study was not designed to estimate income in relation to AMI; as such, the 19-22% is an approximation based on the income ranges reported in Table 9.3. For this report, we used the lower end of the range. See also: <https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/sdc/sdhcd/rental-assistance/income-limits-ami.html>

"WHAT KEEPS ME UP AT NIGHT IS..."

"...the inability to afford the basic cost of living. Struggling to pay for rent, education, and food."

"...I take care of two very elderly parents. I worry about them all the time."

"...Having enough money to keep up with rising costs. San Diego is very expensive to live, but where I've always called home. Being able to cover the expenses and continue the comfortable lifestyle we have is increasingly complicated."

"...I want to be more involved (especially my child) and find myself doing less and less due to rising costs."

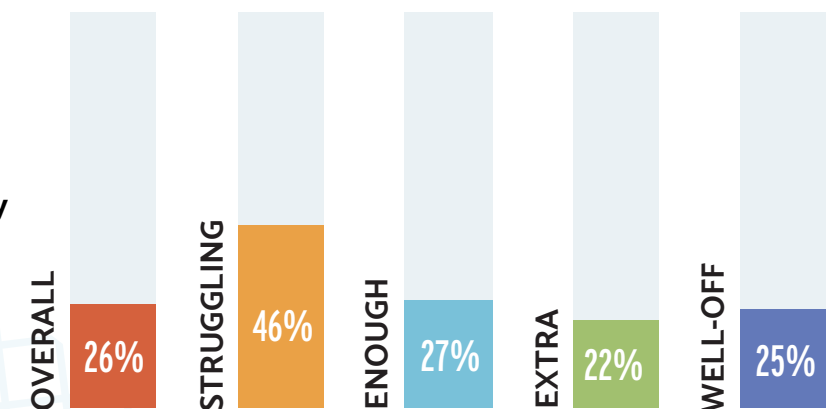
"...There are things that aren't covered very well by Medicare that I just don't have the money to pay for."

HOUSEHOLDS WITH AT LEAST ONE MEMBER WITH A LIMITING HEALTH CONDITION BY FINANCIAL SITUATION

Nearly half of financially struggling households (46%) include an individual with a limiting health condition.

Health issues mostly commonly faced by Jewish households in San Diego are:

- 13% Chronic illness
- 10% Physical Disability
- 9% Mental or Emotional Health Issues



Given existing community responses to need, where are there opportunities to spread awareness, identify new solutions, and activate more resources?

Building Community Connections

The Jewish community is strongly invested in mutual support. There are opportunities to further strengthen community connections by promoting equitable participation across diverse groups. These opportunities range from individual relationship-building to creating more accessible and inclusive community spaces.

“THE STRENGTH IS A MULTITUDE OF JEWISH OFFERINGS FOR EVERY TYPE OF PERSON IN SAN DIEGO.”

Close to two-thirds of San Diego Jewish adults (63%) are at least somewhat satisfied with the level of their participation in the community.

Two demographic groups who were less satisfied with their Jewish life than average include younger adults under age 34 and members of the “cultural,” “holiday,” and “involved” engagement groups (see p. 17).



As we saw earlier, engagement patterns for Jewish adults in San Diego are similar across all age groups, and volunteerism is common among older adults. Still, a North American survey found that 71% of those adults ages 55-74 who are not engaged in Jewish life are open to be. This suggests opportunities for building community connection across life stages.⁸



Where are there opportunities to engage those who seek a greater sense of community connection?

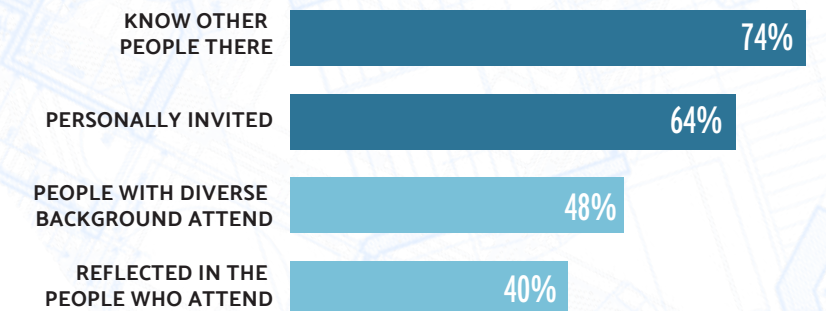
Among all Jewish adults, 42% feel a great deal of belonging to the Jewish people overall. However, only 11% feel a great deal of belonging to the San Diego Jewish community. Community members identified conditions that limit or welcome their participation in the local community.

Not knowing many people was the most-cited barrier to participation.

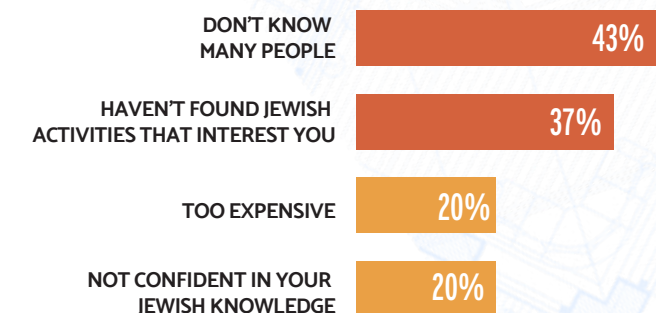
Personal outreach to family, friends, and neighbors could help overcome this barrier. This might look like personally inviting someone to break bread over dinner or to attend a community event.

“THE COMMUNITY DOESN’T KNOW ABOUT ME, AND I DON’T KNOW HOW TO CONNECT TO THE COMMUNITY. SO I IMAGINE I’M NOT THE ONLY PERSON KIND OF WAITING IN THE WINGS, WANTING TO RECONNECT WITH OUR JEWISH ROOTS BUT NOT KNOWING HOW TO DO SO.”

TOP 4 CONDITIONS THAT HELP PEOPLE TO FEEL WELCOME AT JEWISH EVENTS



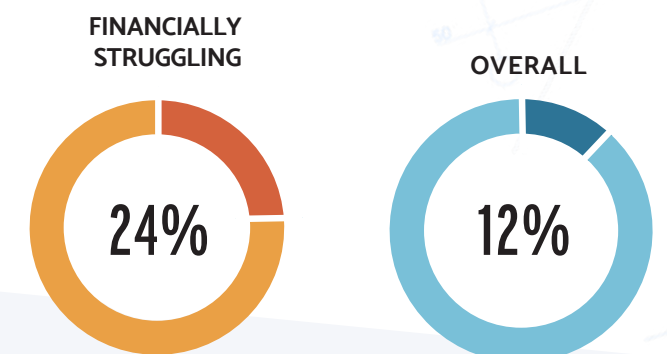
TOP 4 CONDITIONS THAT LIMIT PARTICIPATIONS IN JEWISH EVENTS



Finances were another major barrier to participation.

About half of Jewish adults who are financially struggling find the cost of activities prohibitive. They are also more likely to feel unwelcome at Jewish events than others with more financial means. This points to making community gatherings accessible to all as an important means of promoting equitable participation.

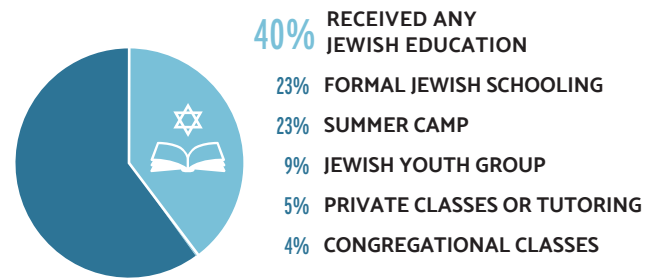
FEELS UNWELCOME AT JEWISH EVENTS



How do we create more opportunities for local engagement given the strong sense of connection that community members feel to their Jewish identities?

⁸ Source: This survey was presented in a July 20, 2023 article by Stuart Himmelfarb, Rabbi Laura Geller and David Alcott entitled “A New Stage in Jewish Life” in eJewish Philanthropy. Available at: <http://www.ejewishphilanthropy.com/a-new-stage-in-jewish-life/>

Among Jewish children who attend early childhood programs, about one-quarter attend Jewish programs specifically. Of those in grades K-12, fewer than half are engaged in some form of Jewish education.



"I WISH THERE WERE MORE COMMUNITIES FOR THOSE SIMILAR TO ME – YOUNG ADULTS WHO ARE CULTURALLY JEWISH BUT NOT RELIGIOUSLY INVOLVED."



What are some strategies for engaging community members that have been effective in the past? How can we replicate or scale these?



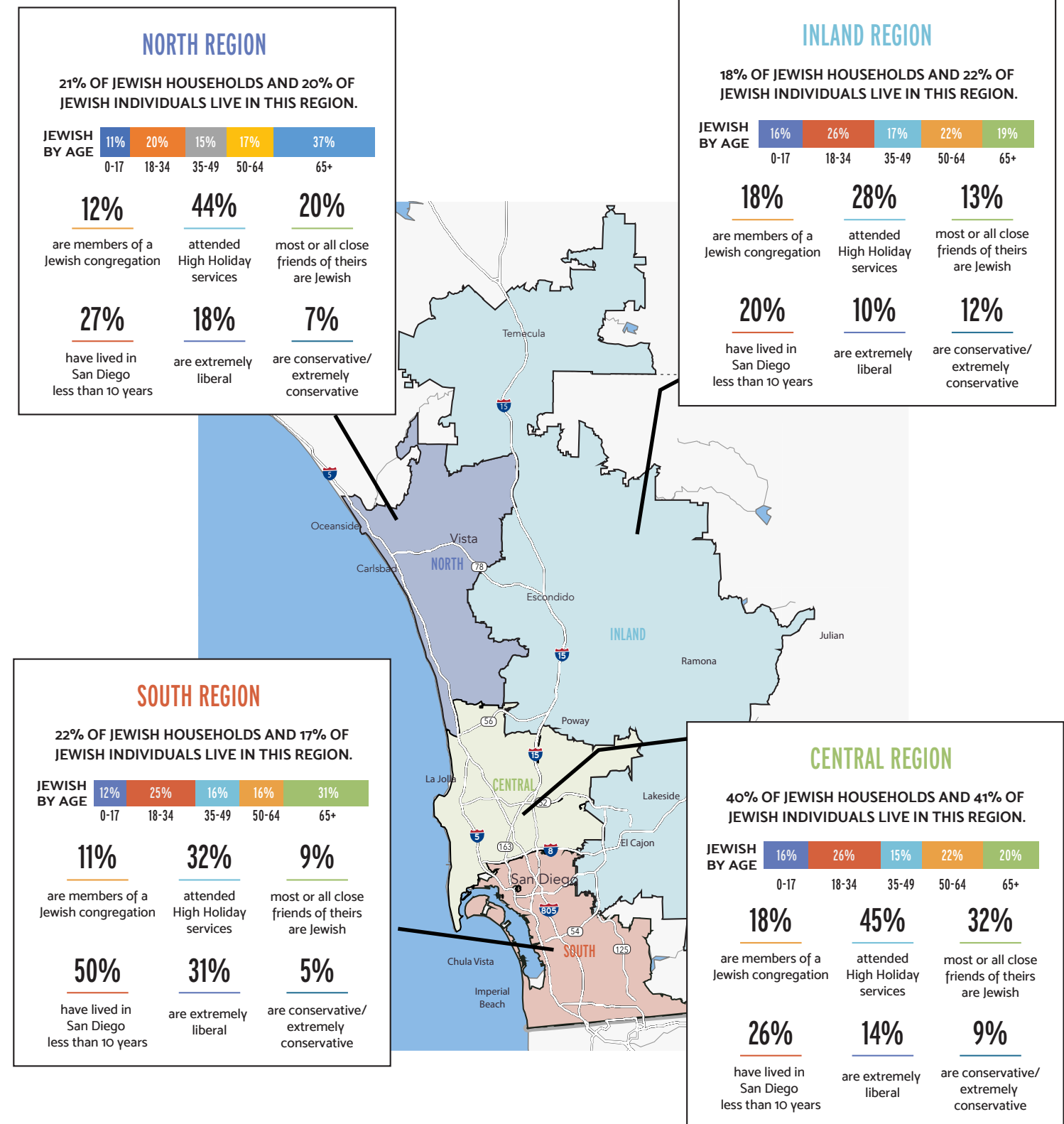
Study participants offered ideas on how organizations can facilitate involvement. Some expressed a desire for adult, youth, and childhood educational programs that touch on Jewish themes and provide opportunities to socialize.

Other ideas related to creating a centralized hub for communication. San Diego Jewish adults receive their information on organizations and programs from a variety of sources, but most commonly through the internet or social media (70%) or family or friends (56%).

Nearly half (48%) of community members say that seeing people with diverse backgrounds in attendance is essential to deciding whether or not to participate in an event. One third (32%) said that organizations making their policies around inclusion and diversity explicit was also an important factor.

"AS A NON-JEW, I WOULD LIKE TO SEE CLASSES NEAR ME THAT HELP ME UNDERSTAND MORE ABOUT JEWISH FAITH AND CULTURE TO HELP MY GRANDDAUGHTER LEARN ABOUT THESE, SINCE SHE IDENTIFIES AS JEWISH."

Regions at a Glance





What's Next?

The findings that are presented in this summary report provide a portrait of the Jewish community of San Diego, including demographic characteristics; diversity; attitude and perspectives; engagement patterns; health and economic security, and building community connections. The study team identified the following as emerging themes that communities can use as a starting point for planning for the future:

1. Balance the needs of all age groups
2. Support the diversity of Jewish engagement
3. Reduce geographic barriers to participation
4. Foster personal connections
5. Reduce financial barriers
6. Address social service needs

This study is part of a long tradition of using the tools of social science to assess the size, character, interests, needs, and concerns of a local Jewish community. The study measures participation in communal and individual Jewish practices, institutional engagement, unmet needs, and many other aspects of Jewish life in San Diego. We hope that this snapshot of the community will stimulate discussion about how best to enhance the lives of community members and strengthen the community as a whole.



