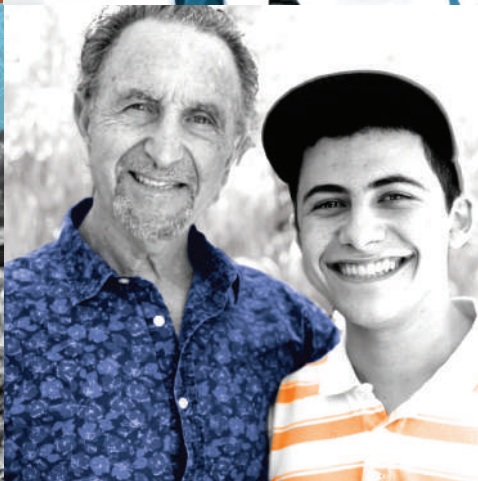


A Blueprint for Our Future

SAN DIEGO
JEWISH COMMUNITY STUDY
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



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NORC at the University of Chicago

A BLUEPRINT FOR OUR FUTURE: 2022 SAN DIEGO JEWISH COMMUNITY STUDY

Executive Summary

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www.brandeis.edu/cmjs/community-studies/san-diego-report.html

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A Blueprint for our Future: The 2022 San Diego Jewish Community Study was conducted by the Maurice and Marilyn Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies (CMJS) at Brandeis University, in partnership with NORC at the University of Chicago. The principal goal of this study is to provide valid data about the San Diego 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. This report is based on data collected from 2,104 Jewish households in San Diego between June and September 2022. Survey respondents were randomly selected from all households in Greater San Diego.

Demographic Snapshot

- There are 134,100 individuals living in 56,200 Jewish households in San Diego, of whom 100,700 are Jewish in some way.
- The rate of growth of the San Diego Jewish population since 2003 (13%) is similar to the growth of the overall county population (14%).
- The San Diego Jewish community is older than the general population of the area and of the US Jewish community. In the San Diego Jewish community, 12% of Jewish individuals are children. In contrast, 21% of all of San Diego County residents are children, and 24% of all US Jewish individuals are children. The smaller share of children corresponds to a larger share of older adults. In the San Diego Jewish community, 17% of Jewish individuals are ages 65 to 74. In contrast, 11% of all of San Diego County residents are ages 65 to 74, and 10% of all US Jewish individuals are ages 65 to 74.
- Nearly three quarters of Jewish adults are married or living with a partner. Of these adults, about half (49%) have a non-Jewish spouse or partner, higher than the share in the national Jewish population (42%).
- While 18% of Jewish individuals in San Diego identify as Hispanic or as any racial group other than white, 6% identify as a Person of Color. Although 5% of Jewish adults identify as a Person of Color, a larger share (13%) of Jewish children is identified as Persons of Color by their parents. This difference suggests that the Jewish community may become more racially and ethnically diverse in the future.
- The largest share of Jewish individuals lives in the Central region (41%), including almost half (48%) of Jewish children. Among Jewish individuals ages 18 to 34, 39% live in the South region.
- Seventeen percent of Jewish households in San Diego include an individual who was born outside the United States.
- Thirty percent of Jewish adults are relative newcomers to 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 newcomers are younger than age 35.
- Nearly one quarter of Jewish households (23%) have members who regularly speak a language other than English at home, including 15% who have members who never speak English at home.

- Among Jewish adults ages 75 and older, 9% are Holocaust survivors or World War II refugees.
- Among Jewish adults in San Diego, 3% identify as Orthodox, 15% as Conservative, 23% as Reform, and 9% as some other denomination. Fully half of Jewish adults (50%) do not identify with a specific denomination. In comparison, among all US Jews, 32% do not identify with a denomination.
- About three quarters of Jewish adults (76%) describe their Jewish heritage as Ashkenazi and 11% describe their heritage as Sephardi. Four percent of Jewish adults identify as Mizrahi or some other heritage. Nationally, 71% of Jewish adults are Ashkenazi, 6% Sephardi, and 3% Mizrahi or some other heritage.
- The majority of Jewish adults in San Diego describe their political orientation as liberal, either extremely liberal (17%), liberal (41%), or slightly liberal (10%). In total, about two thirds of San Diego's Jews are liberal, compared to half of US Jewry.

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 San Diego.
- The Index can be used to identify opportunities to improve communal planning based on people's different needs and interests.
- Five distinct patterns of behavior emerge from the data.
 - Occasional (22% of Jewish adults): Characterized by engaging in few Jewish behaviors.
 - Cultural (26% of Jewish adults): Characterized by engaging in cultural activities, but little participation with Jewish organizations.
 - Holiday (12% of Jewish adults): Characterized by high levels of participation in Jewish religious and ritual activities.
 - Involved (26% of Jewish adults): Characterized by high rates of participation in cultural and religious behaviors, but low frequency in these behaviors.
 - Immersed (12% of Jewish adults): Characterized by the highest level of participation in holidays, ritual, organizational, and cultural activities.
- Engagement groups include people across demographic characteristics and Jewish backgrounds.

Children and Jewish Education

- There are 17,700 children in San Diego Jewish households, including 12,000 with parents who consider their children to be Jewish in some way.
- Among all Jewish children, 29% have two Jewish parents, and 59% have one Jewish parent and one parent who is not Jewish. Thirteen percent of Jewish children are being raised by a single parent.
- Ninety-four percent of children with two Jewish parents are considered Jewish by their parents, and 55% of children with one Jewish parent are considered Jewish by their parents.
- Twenty-eight percent of preschool-age Jewish children attended Jewish early childhood or preschool programs.

- Nearly one quarter (23%) of Jewish students in grades K-12 participated in some form of Jewish schooling during the 2021-22 school year, including 15% in a part-time school, like a Hebrew School, Religious School, or Sunday School; and 8% in a day school or yeshiva.
- In summer 2022, 23% of Jewish K-12 students attended a Jewish camp as a camper or staff member.

Congregations and Rituals

- Fourteen percent of Jewish **households** belong to a Jewish congregation of any type.
- Among Jewish **adults**, 22% live in a household in which someone is a congregation member. Among all US Jews, 35% reside in a congregation-member household.
- Over half of Jewish adults attended at least one Jewish religious service in the previous year, whether in person or online. Thirteen percent attended services monthly or more, and about one third of adults attended a High Holiday service in 2021. Among those who are not synagogue members, 44% attended at least one service.
- About half of service-going Jewish adults (52%) prefer to attend services in person, and another third are willing to participate in either online or in-person services.
- Just over half of Jewish adults in San Diego marked Shabbat in some way during the previous year, including 19% who marked Shabbat always or almost always.
- The most common ways of marking Shabbat include lighting candles (44%), spending time with family and friends (40%), and having a special meal (34%).
- The most commonly observed holiday practice is lighting Hanukkah candles, with 78% of adults lighting Hanukkah candles in 2021.
- Fifty-six percent of adults attended a Passover seder in 2022.

Jewish Organizations and Philanthropy

- Almost one quarter of Jewish households belong to a Jewish organization or an informal Jewish group. Six percent of Jewish households belong to the Lawrence Family JCC.
- Half of Jewish adults participated in a program in the past year that is sponsored or organized by a Jewish organization.
- Half of Jewish adults in the Immersed group participated in a Jewish program at least 10 times in the past year.
- About one-in-five Jewish adults participated in a program sponsored by a congregation. Nine percent participated in a program sponsored by a local Chabad. Nine percent participated in a program sponsored by the Lawrence Family JCC.
- Most Jewish adults learn about Jewish programs happening in San Diego through the internet or social media.
- Nearly all Jewish adults engaged in individual Jewish activities over the past year; the most common activities included talking about Jewish topics (95%), eating traditional Jewish foods (86%), or consuming Jewish-focused media (86%).
- Half of Jewish adults volunteered for at least one organization or cause in the previous year, including 6% who volunteered only for Jewish organizations, 26% who volunteered only for non-Jewish organizations, and 18% who volunteered for both.

- More than four-in-five Jewish adults (82%) made a charitable contribution in the past year, and nearly half (48%) donated to both Jewish and non-Jewish organizations. Three percent of Jewish adults donated only to Jewish organizations and 31% donated only to non-Jewish organizations.
- Two thirds of Jewish adults said that human services are one of the most important causes to or for which they might donate or volunteer.

Community Connections

- Nearly all Jewish adults in San Diego feel at least some sense of belonging to the Jewish people, including 42% who feel a great deal of belonging.
- Seventy percent of Jewish adults feel some sense of belonging to the local San Diego Jewish community, including 11% who feel a great deal of belonging.
- Fifty-one percent of Jewish adults say that they have at least some close Jewish friends, including 19% who say most or all of their friends are Jewish. Older adults have significantly more Jewish friends than do younger adults.
- Close to two thirds (63%) of Jewish adults are at least somewhat satisfied with the level of their participation in the San Diego Jewish community, including 24% who are very satisfied. The remaining third of Jewish adults are not at all (12%) or not too satisfied (26%)—this is the group that may be seeking more connection.
- Satisfaction with their level of participation in the Jewish community is much higher among older adults than younger adults. About half of adults under age 34 are not satisfied with their current level of participation and may be looking for ways to increase their involvement.
- The four most common conditions that limit participation in the Jewish community cited by Jewish adults in San Diego are not knowing many people (43%), a lack of interesting activities (37%), lack of confidence in Jewish knowledge (20%), and the cost of participation (20%).
- The most common conditions that make people to feel welcome in the Jewish community are knowing other people (74%) and being personally invited (64%).
- About half of Jewish adults feel more welcome when people with diverse backgrounds participate in events, and this view is shared by Jewish adults of all ages.
- Seventy percent of Jewish adults are very concerned about antisemitism around the world, and 64% are very concerned about antisemitism in the United States.
- Thirteen percent of Jewish adults personally experienced antisemitism in the past year.

Connections to Israel

- The majority of Jewish adults are emotionally attached to Israel, with 28% feeling very attached and 37% feeling somewhat attached. Taken together, this proportion (65%) is higher than among all US Jewish adults (58%).
- About two thirds of Jewish adults in San Diego (65%) have been to Israel, including 12% who lived there. This share is larger than that of US Jews in general, of whom 45% have traveled to Israel.

- Over one third (38%) of age-eligible Jewish adults (ages 51 and younger) have been on a Birthright trip to Israel.
- More than half of Jewish adults follow news about Israel, 17% very closely and 41% somewhat closely.
- The majority of Jewish adults in San Diego strongly agree that Israel should exist as a refuge for the Jewish people, now and in the future (73%).
- More than half of Jewish adults disagreed with the statement: “I almost always agree with Israel’s policies and actions.”
- Attachment to Israel and views about Israel are highly correlated with overall political views.

Health and Social Service Needs

- One quarter of Jewish households include a member whose work, school, or activities are limited by a chronic health issue, special need, or disability. This includes 2% of households in which the person with the health issue is a child.
- Of Jewish households in which someone had a health issue, 84% needed at least one service in the past three months, and 11% needed no services.
- Forty-nine percent of Jewish households with a health issue received all of the services they needed, 35% received some, and 5% received none of the needed services.
- Fourteen percent of Jewish households with a member age 65 or older have at least one member who needs assistance with the daily activities.
- Nearly half of financially struggling households (46%) include an individual with a limiting health condition.
- Nine percent of Jewish adults reported that they often or always felt lonely in the previous week. And 56% of Jewish adults reported that in the last week, emotional or mental difficulties hurt their ability to live their day-to-day life.
- Financially struggling adults face more mental and emotional health challenges than do those who are better off. Among financially struggling adults, 22% felt lonely often or all the time in the previous week, 15% had emotional or mental health difficulties that harm their daily life in the previous week often or all the time, and 12% have no one in their support network.

Financial Well-Being

- Seventy-five percent of Jewish adults in San Diego have attained at least a bachelor’s degree, a larger share compared to the US Jewish population.
- Two thirds (66%) of Jewish adults not in high school are working, including 48% working full-time in one job or position, 13% working part-time in one job or position, and 5% working in multiple positions. Twenty-six percent of Jewish adults are retired.
- Fifteen percent of Jewish households say they cannot make ends meet (2%) or are just managing to make ends meet (13%).
- Nine percent of Jewish households earn below 250% of the federal poverty level. Less than 2% of Jewish households in San Diego earn below 100% federal poverty level.
- Approximately 19-22% of Jewish households earn under 80% of the Area Median Income, which is defined as low-income in San Diego County.

- When asked to compare their household financial situation with the beginning of 2020, about half of Jewish households (47%) said it was about the same as before, about a quarter said it was worse (27%), and another quarter stated it was better (26%) than before.
- Seven percent of all Jewish households in San Diego were unable to afford a basic necessity in the past year, and another 4% were unable to afford a necessity between one and three years ago. Among financially struggling households, nearly half were unable to afford at least one necessity, including 41% of households in the past year and another 7% of households between one and three years ago.
- Among all San Diego Jewish households, 6% said they are unable to pay in full an unexpected \$400 emergency expense. About one third (32%) of financially struggling households cannot afford a \$400 emergency expense.
- Nineteen percent of all Jewish households reported that their financial situation limited their participation in Jewish life.

Future Directions

Community organizations may wish to consider some of the following themes as starting points as they use study findings to plan for the future:

- **Balance the needs of all age groups.** About three-in-five Jewish adults ages 18-34 have lived in San Diego for fewer than 10 years. Successfully involving this population in the local Jewish community could have enormous impact on Jewish landscape.
- **Support varieties of Jewish engagement.** By understanding the patterns of Jewish engagement and the demographic profile of each engagement group, Jewish organizations will be better able to meet the needs of specific populations as well as design programs that bring diverse groups together over shared interests and concerns.
- **Reduce geographic barriers to participation.** Jewish organizations should consider ways to provide programs and activities to Jews who live outside of the Central region. One of the goals of such programs should be not only to engage Jews with existing organizations, but to connect members of the community to one another.
- **Foster personal connections.** Reaching out to individuals personally—whether to offer support or an invitation to participate in Jewish life—could deepen connections among community members.
- **Reduce financial barriers.** People who are financially struggling are less satisfied with their level of participation in Jewish life, compared with those who are well-off. Nineteen percent of Jewish households had to limit or change their involvement in Jewish life due to their financial situation.
- **Address social service needs.** Financially struggling adults face more mental and emotional health challenges than do those who are better off.