2021 Study of Jewish LA

Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies (CMJS) at Brandeis University and NORC at the University of Chicago

By the Numbers
In This Report

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PREFACE

This is one of a series of reports describing findings from the 2021 Study of Jewish LA. The study was conducted by the Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies at Brandeis University and NORC at the University of Chicago. For an introduction to the study, along with additional reports and material, visit www.brandeis.edu/cmjs/community-studies/los-angeles-report.html or studyofjewishla.org

Index of Jewish Engagement

Jewish life is complex and multidimensional and includes cultural and religious behaviors that are practiced at home, with friends and family, as well as with formal and informal organizations and institutions. Jewish engagement is associated with attitudes, such as feelings of attachment to the Jewish people, and with beliefs, such as valuing social justice.

The 2021 Study of Jewish LA uses a typology of patterns of Jewish engagement as one of its primary analytic tools for understanding Jewish life in LA. LA Jews were categorized into five groups using a statistical analysis (latent class analysis) of levels of participation across 20 different Jewish behaviors, including ritual and cultural behaviors. The names of the five groups reflect the primary ways in which each group engages in Jewish life. This typology is unique to the LA Jewish community and is used throughout this report to highlight the diversity of expressions of Jewish life.

Overview of Methodology

This study is based on analysis of a rich set of data collected from 3,767 eligible households between June and September 2021. Survey respondents were randomly selected from all households in the Los Angeles catchment area (see map). The study design integrated an Address Based Sample (ABS) with known households on Jewish organizational lists. Households were contacted by mail, email, and telephone, and invited to complete the survey online or by telephone. Responses were statistically weighted to represent all LA Jewish households. The response rates for the main sample were 11.2% unweighted and 10.2% weighted (see Technical Appendix for details).

Although some survey responses were likely influenced by the special circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic, which began in March 2020, the questions were designed to provide a demographic and attitudinal portrait of the stable characteristics of the community. As necessary, questions were modified to account for changes in usual patterns of behavior during the pandemic.

INDEX OF JEWISH ENGAGEMENT

Jewish engagement groups and primary activities of each group

23%

MINIMALLY INVOLVED

Few Jewish activities

27%

HOLIDAY

Seder, Hanukkah, Shabbat occasionally

16%

COMMUNAL

Seder, Hanukkah, High Holiday services, attend Jewish programs, donate to Jewish causes, Jewish books/TV/music

16%

RITUAL

Seder, Hanukkah, High Holiday services, Shabbat, half are synagogue members

17%

IMMERSED

All holidays, most are synagogue members, attend Jewish programs, donate to Jewish causes, Jewish books/TV/music
HOW TO READ THIS REPORT

AS YOU READ THIS REPORT, KEEP IN MIND THE FOLLOWING:

TERMS: Unless otherwise specified, references to “all Jewish adults” or “all Jewish households” refer to Jewish adults and Jewish households in Los Angeles. Throughout this report, the term “couples” includes those who are legally married and those who are partnered and living together. Unless otherwise specified, “children” refers to minor children under age 18.

RESPONSES: Information in this report is based on over 3,700 survey responses. Responses to survey questions are often subjective and reflect respondents’ interpretation of survey questions. Data presented in this report reflect an estimate of the distribution of responses to a particular question if every member of the community had been interviewed.

ESTIMATES: Because estimates are based on a probability survey, no one estimate should be considered an exact measurement. As a guideline, the reader should assume that all estimates have a range of plus or minus five points; therefore, reported differences between any two numbers of less than 10 percentage points may not necessarily reflect true differences in the population.

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 subgroup for reporting reliable information, the estimate is shown as “—”.

COMPARISONS ACROSS SUBGROUPS: 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. Unless otherwise specified, all tables in this report that compare subgroups reflect some significant difference. However, 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. As noted above, as a rule of thumb, differences between any two numbers of less than 10 percentage points may not reflect true differences in the population.

QUOTES: in this report may have been edited for clarity and to protect privacy. While representing an individual experience, the quotes illustrate the themes identified in the numeric data.

“Each report brings a fresh analysis of the data in the hope of stimulating community members to ask new questions, engage in strategy conversations, and consider the implications for our community. These thematic reports are intended to act as a starting point and designed to spark curiosity.”

RABBI NOAH FARKAS, PRESIDENT AND CEO
JEWISH FEDERATION OF GREATER LOS ANGELES
This report discusses the size and demographic characteristic of the Los Angeles Jewish community. The ways in which members of the LA Jewish community participate in Jewish life—whether at home with family celebrations and personal activities or in programs sponsored by Jewish organizations—are closely related to their ages, household composition, denomination, marital status, and other demographic factors.

As of 2021, it is estimated that the Los Angeles catchment area is the home to nearly 300,000 Jewish households. These households include almost 740,000 individuals, of whom 564,700 are Jewish. Approximately 8% of all residents of the catchment area are Jewish, and 11.3% of all households include at least one Jewish adult. The geographic boundaries of the catchment area are described on the next page.

The most recent scientific study of the LA Jewish community prior to this one was conducted in 1997. Over the last quarter century, the number of Jews increased by about 9%. Concurrently, the total number of people in Jewish households grew by 25%. By comparison, the overall LA County population increased by 5% between 2000 and 2020. The dramatic increase in the total number of people in Jewish households is related to rising rates of intermarriage and the growing number of non-Jewish individuals in these households.

### Change in LA Jewish Population, 1997-2021

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total People in Jewish Households</th>
<th>Total Jews</th>
<th>Total Jewish Households</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>259,000</td>
<td>562,000</td>
<td>173,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2021</td>
<td>294,200</td>
<td>564,700</td>
<td>182,900</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **+9%** increase in people in Jewish households
- **+25%** increase in total Jews
- **+19%** increase in total Jewish households

### Jewish Population Estimates of LA, 2021

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Estimate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jewish Households</td>
<td>294,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People in Jewish Households</td>
<td>737,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Jewish Individuals</td>
<td>173,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Jewish Individuals</td>
<td>564,700</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Adults

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Estimate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td>462,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Jewish Or Unknown</td>
<td>143,900</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Estimate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td>101,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Jewish Or Unknown</td>
<td>29,900</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: numbers do not add up to total due to rounding.

### Terms

- **Jewish Adults**: Identify as Jewish (by religion, ethnically, or culturally) and have a Jewish background: at least one Jewish parent, raised Jewish, or converted to Judaism
- **Jewish Households**: Households that include at least one Jewish adult
- **Jewish Children**: Children in Jewish households whose parents consider them to be Jewish
The Jewish community is located throughout the cities and neighborhoods of Los Angeles: East from the coastline, West from Silver Lake/Downtown/the 710 freeway, North from San Pedro, including the San Fernando, Conejo, Simi, Santa Clarita, and Antelope Valleys. For analysis purposes, this report divides the community into the six regions described below.

**NORTH COUNTY VALLEYS**: Canyon Country, Castaic, Newhall, Palmdale, Santa Clarita, Simi Valley, Stevenson Ranch

**EAST VALLEY**: Arleta, Burbank, Glendale, La Crescenta, North Hills, North Hollywood, Panorama City, Sherman Oaks, Studio City, Sunland, Sylmar, Toluca Lake, Tujunga, Tuna Canyon, Valley Village, Van Nuys

**WESTSIDE**: Bel Air, Beverly Hills, Brentwood, Century City, Culver City, Fox Hills, Malibu, Mar Vista, Marina del Rey, North Beverly Hills, Pacific Palisades, Palms/La Cienega Heights, Playa del Rey, Rancho Park, Santa Monica, Sawtelle, Topanga, UCLA, Venice, Westwood


**SOUTH BAY**: Carson, Carver City, El Segundo, Hermosa Beach, Lomita, Manhattan Beach, Redondo, Redondo Beach, Rolling Hills, San Pedro, Torrance, Wilmington

**PERCENTAGE OF JEWISH HOUSEHOLDS IN EACH REGION**:  
- **4%** NORTH COUNTY VALLEYS  
- **15%** EAST VALLEY  
- **26%** WESTSIDE  
- **26%** WEST VALLEY  
- **24%** CENTRAL/METRO/MID  
- **5%** SOUTH BAY
Los Angeles Jewish adults skew older than the LA County population as a whole and are similar in age to all US Jewish adults.

### Ages of Jewish Adults

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Jewish LA</th>
<th>Jewish US</th>
<th>LA County</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18-24 yrs</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-34 yrs</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-44 yrs</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-54 yrs</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-64 yrs</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65-74 yrs</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75+ yrs</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

48% of LA Jewish adults are 55 and older.

### Median/Mean Ages

The mean age of local Jewish adults is 51, and the median age is 53; nationally, the median age of Jewish adults is 49. Including children in the analysis lowers the mean age. The mean age of all Jewish Angelenos is 43, and the median is 45.

### Ages of Jewish Children

- 6-12 yrs: 28%
- 0-5 yrs: 28%
- 13-19 yrs: 40%
- Unknown: 3%

### Gender

Overall, the Los Angeles Jewish community is 49% female, 49% male, and 1% non-binary or another gender identity.
Household Composition

The nearly 300,000 Los Angeles Jewish households include families with children under age 18 (24%) and married or cohabiting couples without children at home (29%). Another 29% of Jewish households include an adult living alone or with unrelated roommates.

**HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION**

- **24%** HOUSEHOLDS WITH CHILDREN
- **29%** SINGLE ADULT WITHOUT CHILDREN AT HOME
- **29%** COUPLE WITHOUT CHILDREN AT HOME
- **18%** MULTIGENERATIONAL ADULTS

**TERMS**

**COUPLES** include both those who are legally married and those who are partnered and living together.

**MULTIGENERATIONAL HOUSEHOLDS** are defined as parents and adult children of any age living together. These households are nearly all adults in their 20s or 30s living with parents or grandparents in their 50s and older, but also include middle-aged adults living with a parent in their 70s or older. These households do not include children.

**CHILDREN** are minors under age 18.

**MEAN JEWISH HOUSEHOLD SIZE**

- **2.5** INDIVIDUALS
- **1.9** JEWISH INDIVIDUALS
- **1.8** CHILDREN (among households with children)
The Los Angeles Jewish population is highly educated. Thirty-six percent of Jewish adults hold a graduate degree of some kind, and about two thirds (68%) have at least a bachelor’s degree. Nationally, 58% of Jewish adults have a college degree.\(^7\)

Nearly two thirds of Jewish adults not enrolled in high school are working, and another 6% are unemployed and looking for work. One-in-five Jewish adults are retired.
The majority of Jewish households are financially comfortable, but 19% report either being unable to make ends meet or just managing to make ends meet. Throughout this report, we refer to these two categories as “struggling.”

### Household Financial Situation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CANNOT MAKE ENDS MEET</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JUST MANAGING TO MAKE ENDS MEET</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HAVE ENOUGH MONEY</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HAVE EXTRA MONEY</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WELL-OFF</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Not shown: 26% who do not know or prefer not to answer.)

### Household Income, 2020

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income Range</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LESS THAN $50,000</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$50,000 TO $99,999</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$100,000 TO $149,999</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$150,000 TO $249,999</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$250,000 TO $499,999</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$500,000 OR MORE</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### COVID-19 Pandemic Impact

Sixteen percent of Jewish households report that their financial situation is somewhat or much worse than it was before the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.
JEWISH HOUSEHOLD FINANCIAL SITUATION BY INCOME LEVEL, 2020

Note: Among the 26% of households that did not report income, 13% are financially struggling, and 28% are well-off.

- **12% UNDER $50,000**
  - 57% STRUGGLING
  - 30% ENOUGH
  - 12% EXTRA
  - 3% WELL-OFF

- **19% $50,000 - $99,999**
  - 27% STRUGGLING
  - 46% ENOUGH
  - 22% EXTRA
  - 4% WELL-OFF

- **16% $100,000 - $149,999**
  - 18% STRUGGLING
  - 37% ENOUGH
  - 34% EXTRA
  - 11% WELL-OFF

- **15% $150,000 - $249,999**
  - 12% STRUGGLING
  - 29% ENOUGH
  - 36% EXTRA
  - 23% WELL-OFF

- **9% $250,000 - $499,999**
  - 2% STRUGGLING
  - 16% ENOUGH
  - 33% EXTRA
  - 50% WELL-OFF

- **3% $500,000 OR MORE**
  - 11% ENOUGH
  - 12% EXTRA
  - 77% WELL-OFF

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57% of those earning under $50,000 perceive themselves as struggling, while 3% describe themselves as well-off.

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FEDERAL POVERTY LEVEL AMONG ALL JEWISH HOUSEHOLDS IN LA*

- **12% < 250% FPL**
- **2% < 100% FPL**
- **3% 100-149% FPL**
- **7% 150-249% FPL**
Nationally, a declining share of Jewish adults identify with a specific Jewish denomination, and in Los Angeles this trend is especially prevalent. Half of Jewish adults have no denomination and identify either as secular/cultural Jews or as “just Jewish.” In comparison, 32% of all US Jewish adults have no specific denomination.\(^9\)

**DENOMINATION OF JEWISH ADULTS IN LA\(^{10}\)**

- **50% NO DENOMINATION**
  Compared to 32% of US Jews
- **25% REFORM**
  Compared to 37% of US Jews
- **15% CONSERVATIVE**
  Compared to 17% of US Jews
- **7% ORTHODOX**
  Compared to 9% of US Jews\(^{11}\)
- **4% OTHER DENOMINATION**
  Compared to 4% of US Jews
Among Jewish adults in LA who are married or partnered, 42% are married to a non-Jewish person (intermarriage rate). The national intermarriage rate for married Jews is 42%.11

### Inmarriage and Intermarriage

“COUPLES” and “MARRIAGES” include married and cohabiting couples. “Spouse” refers to marital spouses and partners.

**INMARRIED**: two partners who are currently Jewish, 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

### INDIVIDUAL MARITAL STATUS BY AGE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>OVERALL</th>
<th>22-30 yrs</th>
<th>31-40 yrs</th>
<th>41-54 yrs</th>
<th>55-64 yrs</th>
<th>65-74 yrs</th>
<th>75+ yrs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>MARRIED/ PARTNERED JEWISH ADULTS</strong></td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>INMARRIED</strong> (of those married/partnered)</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>INTERMARRIED</strong> (of those married/partnered)</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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### DEFINING TERMS

**INMARRIED**: two partners who are currently Jewish, 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
Notes

1 ACS 2019 5-year estimates.


3 For the previous study, those who considered themselves to be Jewish and another religion were not classified as Jewish adults.

4 US Decennial Census, data.census.gov


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

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


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


11 Pew Research Center, “Jewish Americans in 2020.” Based on marriages only, not partners.