

JEWISH MAINE

THE 2024 COMMUNITY STUDY



ALAN
CLAUDE

Brandeis

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SMALL TOWN
JEWISH LIFE



Jewish
Community Alliance
of Southern Maine

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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.

COMMUNITY ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Dear Jewish Community of Maine,

On behalf of our boards and staff, we are thrilled and honored to present the results of the 2024 Study of Jewish Maine. Conducted by the Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies (CMJS) and the Steinhardt Social Research Institute (SSRI) at Brandeis University, this demographic and population study reflects the most comprehensive research of Jewish Maine to date. The study provides a fresh picture of our Jewish community statewide, providing vital insights into ways of meeting current community needs and building a thriving community into the future.

At an overarching level, this study is focused on what it means to be Jewish in Maine at this moment. How large is our community? Where does our population live? How do we engage in Jewish life and connect with the Jewish community? How do we connect to Israel? How are we raising and educating our children? How many of us struggle with unmet health, financial or social needs? How many are living with disabilities? This study answers these and many other questions relevant to the present and future of our community and offers guideposts for creating the most welcoming, inclusive and vibrant Jewish Maine possible.

Some aspects of the study are surprising; some are troubling. The study will help us understand our strengths, needs, and potential by answering questions about the size and composition of our community, as well as the ways we engage Jewishly. It will form the basis of many critical policy discussions over the coming months to make better and more informed decisions about the strategies we choose to continue building and sustaining our community. It will serve as a valuable resource for our agencies, synagogues and other Jewish organizations to prioritize services, to improve outreach efforts and to recalibrate organizationally.

We would like to extend our deepest gratitude to the many individuals and organizations whose partnership and support brought the 2024 Maine Jewish Community Study to fruition. We are especially grateful to Lisa Gorman, whose generous support and unwavering belief in the importance of data-driven Jewish communal planning helped bring this study to life. Lisa's leadership has long strengthened our institutions and inspired meaningful progress across Maine's Jewish landscape—this study is yet another example of her powerful legacy in motion.

We also extend sincere appreciation to the Sam L. Cohen Foundation, whose longstanding commitment to strengthening Jewish life in Maine has been a cornerstone of this project and countless others. The Foundation's staff and leadership offered thoughtful guidance and collaboration every step of the way, serving not only as funders, but as thought partners in ensuring this study would be actionable, inclusive and community-focused.

Many thanks to the researchers at Brandeis, notably Dr. Matthew Boxer, principal researcher, for their wisdom, expertise and guidance in conducting and analyzing this study. 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 boards for recognizing the importance of the data to the future of Jewish Maine, and to professional staff for moving the project forward. Thanks in particular to JCA staff member Sam Cohen and CFSTJL Associate Director Rabbi David Freidenreich for their tireless work in coordinating with Dr. Boxer to complete the report. And a special thanks to JCA staff member Jessica Doucette for the gorgeous artwork on the cover of the report.

Thanks to all our partner organizations in the community who provided input on survey questions and encouraged their constituents to participate. And lastly, thank you to those individuals who participated in the survey for answering the call to contribute to this landmark research.

Together, these partners have helped us lay the foundation for a stronger, more informed and more connected Jewish future in Maine.

We are proud to have initiated and led this vital project in collaboration to better understand and serve our evolving community. From its earliest stages, we have shared expertise, vision and commitment to a thriving Jewish life to design and strategically frame this effort, and we look forward to continued collaboration as we implement work coming from the study.

While Brandeis has concluded their work, the community's work is just beginning. As we start to make meaning out of these robust findings and determine how to turn data into action, we invite you to join us in study, reflection and dialogue. We invite you to review the report and supplementary materials, and to be open, curious, and ask questions. We invite you to share and discuss your takeaways with your friends, children and neighbors. And we invite you to consider how these learnings might impact the decisions we make collectively and as individuals to ensure a strong and thriving future Jewish Maine. We look forward to sharing the journey toward a stronger, better connected and more dynamic Jewish community ahead.

May we all continue to go from strength to strength,

L'Shalom,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Leslie Kirby".

Dr. Leslie Kirby
CEO, Jewish Community Alliance of Southern Maine

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Rabbi Rachel Isaacs".

Rabbi Rachel Isaacs
Executive Director, Center for Small Town Jewish Life, Colby College

CMJS/SSRI ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Maurice and Marilyn Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies (CMJS) research team is grateful to the Jewish Community Alliance of Southern Maine (JCA) and the Center for Small Town Jewish Life at Colby College (CSTJL) for the opportunity to collaborate on the *Jewish Maine: The 2024 Community Study*. We are particularly grateful to Molly Curren Rowles, former Executive Director of the JCA, and Daniel Heinrich, former Deputy Director of the CSTJL, who were our partners from the beginning of the study process. Molly and Daniel, together with Sam Cohen and David Freidenreich, helped us learn about the community and, by providing valuable input into the study design, questionnaire, and report, helped ensure that our work would be of the highest quality and utility for the Jewish community in Maine. We also thank the 1,366 respondents who completed the survey. Without their willingness to spend time answering questions about their lives, there could be no study.

We are grateful for the work of the University of New Hampshire Survey Center, our data-collection partner for this study. Zachary Azem was our main point of contact, survey instrument programmer, and supervisor for data collection. Sean McKinley was instrumental in testing the survey. Jordan Osgood managed the call-center operation, including training and supervising callers, fielding callbacks, and countless other tasks. We would also like to thank the callers who collected data from respondents; the study would not have been possible without them.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Demographics

- There are approximately 10,600 Jewish households in Maine, including 6,500 in Southern Maine and 4,100 in the rest of the state. These households include 28,100 individuals:
 - Southern Maine: 6,500 Jewish households including 17,600 individuals, of whom 12,100 are Jewish:
 - 9,300 Jewish adults
 - 2,800 Jewish children
 - 5,000 non-Jewish adults
 - 500 non-Jewish children
 - Rest of Maine: 4,100 Jewish households, including 10,400 individuals, of whom 7,000 are Jewish:
 - 6,100 Jewish adults
 - 900 Jewish children
 - 3,100 non-Jewish adults
 - 400 non-Jewish children
- The mean age of Jewish adults in Maine is 52, and the median age is 54, slightly older than the national median age of Jewish adults, 49. Including children, the mean age of all Jewish individuals in Maine is 43, and the median age is 47.
- Twenty-six percent of Jewish households in Maine include at least one child under age 18.
- The individual intermarriage rate (i.e., the proportion of married Jewish adults with a non-Jewish spouse) in Maine is 60%, higher than the national average of 42%.
- Fifty-three percent of Jewish adults in Maine do not identify with any particular denomination of Judaism. Three percent identify as Orthodox, 16% as Conservative, 23% as Reform, and 5% identify with other denominations.
- Seventy-seven percent of Jewish adults in Maine identify as Ashkenazi. Six percent identify as Sephardi, 1% as Mizrahi, and 2% with other Jewish ethnicities. Eight percent do not identify with any particular Jewish ethnic heritage, and 8% say they do not know their Jewish ethnicity. (Total exceeds 100% because respondents could identify with more than one option.)
- Seven percent of Jewish individuals in Maine identify with a racial category other than non-Hispanic white. However, only 3% identify as a Person of Color.
- Twelve percent of Jewish adults in Maine identify as LGBTQ+.
- Ten percent of Jewish adults in Maine were raised in a Russian-speaking household.
- Two percent of Jewish adults in Maine are Israeli citizens.
- Twenty-six percent of Jewish adults in Maine describe themselves politically as very liberal. Forty-two percent describe themselves as liberal, 25% as moderate, 6% as conservative, and 1% as very conservative.
- Twenty-two percent of Jewish adults in Maine were born in the state. Twenty-five percent of Jewish adults in Maine were raised primarily in the state. Nineteen percent of Jewish adults in Maine were both born and raised in the state.

- Forty-seven percent of Jewish adults in Maine have resided in their current county for 20 years or more. Sixteen percent have resided in their current county for 10-19 years, 14% for five to nine years, and 23% for less than five years.
- Eight percent of Jewish adults in Maine say they definitely plan to move away from their current homes in the next three years. Ten percent say they will probably move, 45% will probably not move, and 37% will definitely not move. Of those who definitely or probably plan to move, 64% plan to move within the state, 27% plan to move to another state in the United States, and 9% expect to move to another country.
- Eight percent of Jewish households in Maine live outside the state for part of the year.

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 Maine—not on self-identification.
- The Index can be used to identify opportunities to improve communal planning based on people’s different needs and interests.
- Four distinct patterns of engagement emerge in Maine:
 - Minimally Involved (42% of Jewish adults): Characterized by minimal participation in Jewish life.
 - Connected (27% of Jewish adults): Characterized by high participation in holiday and religious-based activities.
 - Affiliated (17% of Jewish adults): Characterized by active participation in many aspects of Jewish life.
 - Immersed (14% of Jewish adults): Characterized by frequent engagement in nearly all aspects of Jewish life.
- Engagement groups include people of all ages and denominational identities.
- Demographic characteristics are related to membership in these four engagement groups.

Jewish Children and Education

- Among the 4,600 children being raised in Jewish households in Maine, 3,700 are being raised Jewish in some way.
- Among the 900 children not being raised Jewish, 100 are being raised in no religion, 300 are being raised in another religion, and 500 have parents who either have not yet determined how they will raise their children or did not provide enough information to assess the children’s Jewish identities.
- One percent of Jewish children in grades K-8 in Southern Maine were enrolled in a Jewish day school during the 2023-24 academic year.
- Sixteen percent of Jewish children in grades K-8 in Maine were enrolled in a part-time Jewish school during the 2023-24 academic year.
- Eight percent of Jewish children in grades K-8 in Maine were tutored in Jewish subjects during the 2023-24 academic year.

- Ten percent of Jewish children in grades K-12 in Maine participated in a Jewish youth group or teen program during the 2023-24 academic year. Six percent participated in a Jewish volunteer or teen leadership program.
- Thirteen percent of Jewish children in grades K-12 in Maine attended a Jewish summer camp as a camper or staff member in the summer of 2024. This includes 8% who attended a day camp and 6% who attended an overnight camp.
- Twenty percent of Jewish children ages 12 and older in Maine have ever participated in an immersive Jewish teen travel program, either in Israel (5%) or somewhere else (16%).
- Twenty-nine percent of Jewish households in Maine with at least one child age 12 or younger said they receive books from PJ Library or PJ Our Way. Another 15% of such households were not aware of these programs.

Congregations and Ritual Life

- Twenty-four percent of Jewish households in Maine belong to a synagogue or other Jewish congregation, lower than the national average of 35%.
- Fifty-three percent of Jewish adults in Maine attended Jewish religious services at least once in the past year, either in person or online, including 35% of Jewish adults who are not members of any Jewish congregation. Eighteen percent attended services at least once a month.
- During the 2023 High Holidays, 40% of Jewish adults in Maine attended services.
- Fifty-four percent of Jewish adults in Maine marked Shabbat in some way during the past year, including 15% who did so every week or nearly every week.
- The most common ways the Jews of Maine mark Shabbat is by lighting candles on Friday night (42%), spending time with family or friends (36%), and having a special Shabbat meal (36%).
- Seventy-six percent of Jewish adults in Maine lit Hanukkah candles in 2023, and 57% attended or held a Passover seder in 2024. Thirty-four percent fasted on Yom Kippur in 2023, and 25% observe at least some of the laws of kashrut.

Community Connections

- Sixty-three percent of Jewish adults in Maine have at least some close Jewish friends.
- Ninety-seven percent of Jewish adults in Maine feel at least some sense of belonging to the Jewish people.
- Seventy-one percent of Jewish adults in Maine feel at least some sense of belonging to a Jewish community where they live.
- Fifty-five percent of Jewish adults in Maine feel at least some sense of belonging to a Jewish community not where they live, such as a Jewish summer camp, a place where they used to live, a Jewish organization, or an online Jewish group.
- Twenty-seven percent of Jewish households said they belong to at least one Jewish organization, aside from congregations.
- In the past year, 57% of Jewish adults in Maine participated in a program sponsored by a Jewish organization in the state.

- The most common barriers to Jewish adults' participation in the Maine Jewish community are not having found Jewish programs of interest (32%), location not being convenient (30%), and not feeling confident in one's Jewish knowledge (17%).
- Fifty-three percent of Jewish adults in Maine volunteered somewhere in the past year. Four percent volunteered exclusively with Jewish organizations, 19% volunteered with both Jewish and non-Jewish organizations, and 31% volunteered exclusively with non-Jewish organizations.
- Eighty-five percent of Jewish households in Maine made charitable donations in the past year. Two percent donated exclusively to Jewish organizations, 46% donated to both Jewish and non-Jewish organizations, and 37% donated exclusively to non-Jewish organizations.

Antisemitism

- Seventy-four percent of Jewish adults in Maine are somewhat concerned (44%) or very concerned (30%) about antisemitism in the state.
- Ninety-three percent of Jewish adults in Maine are somewhat concerned (30%) or very concerned (63%) about antisemitism in the United States.
- Ninety-four percent of Jewish adults in Maine are somewhat concerned (22%) or very concerned (72%) about antisemitism around the world.
- Fifty-two percent of Jewish adults in Maine have avoided activities in the past year due to fear of antisemitism.
- In the past year, 35% of Jewish adults in Maine have experienced verbal remarks, acts of vandalism, or physical threats or attacks motivated by antisemitism.

Connections to Israel

- Forty-seven percent of Jewish adults in Maine have visited Israel at least once.
- Fifty-seven percent of Jewish adults in Maine are somewhat (31%) or very much emotionally attached (26%) to Israel.
- In the aftermath of the Hamas-led and -coordinated armed incursions into Israel on October 7, 2023, 49% of Jewish adults in Maine felt somewhat (28%) or much more attached (21%) to Israel. Twenty-two percent felt somewhat (11%) or much less attached (11%), and 29% experienced no change in their attachment.
- Eighty percent of Jewish adults in Maine follow news about Israel somewhat (43%) or very closely (37%).
- Thirty-seven percent of Jewish adults in Maine somewhat (16%) or strongly agree (21%) that they describe themselves as Zionists. Forty-four percent somewhat (8%) or strongly disagree (36%), and 19% have no opinion or are not sure. Nevertheless, there is still strong support for a variety of pro-Israel views within the community.

Financial Well-Being

- Seventy-two percent of Jewish adults in Maine have earned at least a bachelor's degree, including 44% who have obtained a graduate or professional degree.

- Sixty-four percent of Jewish adults in Maine who are not in high school are working either a full-time job (41%), a part-time job (12%), or in multiple positions (11%). Twenty-three percent are retired. Twelve percent are not currently employed or retired, including 3% who are currently looking for work.
- Sixteen percent of Jewish households in Maine either cannot make ends meet (1%) or are just managing to make ends meet (15%).
- Ten percent of Jewish households in Maine said they have household income below \$50,000, while 12% have household income of \$250,000 or more. Twenty-two percent of Jewish households did not provide information about household income. However, these households are likely to be slightly more affluent than the overall Maine Jewish community: in the aggregate, they reported slightly higher standards of living than the households that did answer the income question.
- Forty-six percent of Jewish households in Maine have some form of debt, including student loans (33%), credit card debt (28%), or medical debt (15%).
- In the past year, 22% of Jewish adults in Maine had to limit or change their involvement in Jewish life due to their financial situation.

Health Needs

- Sixty-four percent of Jewish adults in Maine describe their physical health as very good (41%) or excellent (23%).
- Fifty-six percent of Jewish adults in Maine describe their mental health as very good (34%) or excellent (22%).
- Twenty-eight percent of Jewish households in Maine include at least one person with a chronic health issue, disability or health need.
- In the past year, 28% of Jewish households in Maine required services to manage health needs. Most of these households were able to obtain the services they required, but 8% felt they did not receive adequate services to manage their issues.
- When assessing their local support networks, 4% of Jewish adults in Maine felt they have no one they can call upon when they need assistance, and 42% can only rely on a few people.
- Twenty-two percent of all Jewish households in Maine manage or provide care to close relatives or friends on a regular basis, aside from routine childcare.

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

The *2024 Maine 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 sponsored by the Jewish Community Alliance of Southern Maine and the Center for Small Town Jewish Life at Colby College, employed innovative state-of-the-art methods to create a comprehensive portrait of the characteristics, attitudes, and behaviors of the present-day Jewish community in Maine. Where possible, the analysis in this report separates the state into two geographic areas: Southern Maine, defined as Cumberland, Sagadahoc, and York Counties; and the rest of the state.

Some of the issues explored in this 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 *Jewish Americans in 2020* (2021), Pew's follow-up report published shortly prior to this study's planning phase, 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 *2024 Maine Jewish Community Study* seeks to describe the current dynamics of the Jewish population of Maine.

The principal goal of this study is to provide valid data about the Maine 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

Jewish Maine: The 2024 Community Study provides a snapshot of today's Jewish population in Maine and considers trends and developments that diverge from those of the past.

History

The present study is at least the second population study about the Southern Maine Jewish community. The previous study, conducted in 2007 and covering only Cumberland and York Counties, identified approximately 8,350 Jews living in the region.² The 2007 study can be found at the Berman Jewish Data Bank, <https://www.jewishdatabank.org/databank/local-studies>. We believe that no previous representative-sample study has covered the rest of the state, making this the first-ever study of the full Jewish population of the State of Maine.

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 present study is based on data collected through telephone and internet surveys from June to September 2024 from a total of 1,366 Jewish households residing for at least part of the year in Maine. The response rate for the primary sample was 45.9% (AAPOR RR4).³

Households invited to participate in the survey were randomly selected from a combination of contact information provided by local community organizations and purchased lists of likely Jewish households. To ensure that the households were representative of the entire Jewish 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, conducted by government agencies and other organizations, that include information about religion. Using that combined data and information collected from Maine residents, we were able to estimate the Jewish population in the region. See <https://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 extrapolated 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. (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 because of systematic differences between the people who happened to complete the survey and the people who did not participate in the study. 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 C, 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 5.1 (page 57).

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 3.4 (page 39) indicates that there are significant differences between engagement groups on the extent to which observing Jewish law is an important part of being Jewish. 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. These quotes were selected not to endorse the views expressed by respondents, but to represent the range of views on that particular topic.

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 Southern Maine was conducted in 2007 and there has been no previous study of the rest of Maine, very few comparisons can be 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 Maine Jewish community is similar to or different from the United States Jewish community.

Limitations

Due to the methodology used to reach community members, some groups were likely to be undercounted and/or underrepresented. In particular, residents of institutional settings such as hospitals, nursing homes, and dormitories on college campuses, as well as adults who were never in contact with any Maine Jewish organization, were less likely to have been identified and contacted to complete the survey. Some populations, such as financially struggling households, might be less likely to participate in the survey. Although we cannot produce precise estimates of any undercounts, they are unlikely to have introduced significant bias into the reported estimates. Where appropriate, we have reported limitations of the methodology.

The present report has been designed to provide basic information about Jewish life in Maine across a wide variety of topics and an array of subgroups within the population. It was not designed to provide detailed information about any single topic or subset of the community. Although detailed data cannot always be provided, the information that is included in this report can serve as a springboard for more specific, targeted analyses, as well as follow-up research. Note that more details about each item are available in the report appendices and through analysis of the public-use dataset.

Report overview

This report presents key findings about the Maine 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 Maine Jewish community today.

Chapter 3. Patterns of Jewish Engagement

This chapter describes the multifaceted ways in which the Jews of Maine 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 Maine Jewish community.

Chapter 4. Jewish Children and Education

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

Chapter 5. Congregations and Ritual Life

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

Chapter 6. Community Connections

This chapter discusses membership and involvement in organizational, social, and personal Jewish life as well as volunteering and philanthropy. It also explores barriers that limit participation in the Jewish community.

Chapter 7. Antisemitism

This chapter explores concerns about and experiences of antisemitism among members of the Maine Jewish community.

Chapter 8. Connections to Israel

This chapter describes travel and emotional connection to Israel, as well as views about Israel and the effects of October 7th on connection to Israel.

Chapter 9. Financial Well-Being

This chapter examines the living conditions of Maine Jewish households, in particular with regard to economic well-being and hardship.

Chapter 10. Health Needs

This chapter examines the health and social service concerns of Jewish households and individuals in Maine.

Chapter 11. In the Words of Community Members

This chapter summarizes survey respondents' answers to open-ended questions at the end of the survey about the community's strengths and weaknesses and sources of satisfaction, joy, and meaning in respondents' lives as Jews in Maine.

Chapter 12. Conclusions and Recommendations

This chapter summarizes some key findings from the study and makes recommendations, based on the data, to strengthen the Maine 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

Description of detailed cross-tabulations of all survey data for key subgroups of the population

Appendix C. Survey Instrument and Codebook

Details of survey questions and conditions, along with the original weighted responses

Appendix D. Study Documentation

Copies of the recruitment materials and training documents used with the call center

Appendix E. Maps

Thematic maps of key findings from the survey

CHAPTER 2. DEMOGRAPHIC SNAPSHOT

Chapter highlights

This chapter focuses on the size and basic demographic characteristics of the Maine Jewish community.

- There are approximately 10,600 Jewish households in Maine, including 6,500 in Southern Maine and 4,100 in the rest of the state. These households include 28,100 individuals:
 - Southern Maine: 6,500 Jewish households including 17,600 individuals, of whom 12,100 are Jewish:
 - 9,300 Jewish adults
 - 2,800 Jewish children
 - 5,000 non-Jewish adults
 - 500 non-Jewish children
 - Rest of Maine: 4,100 Jewish households, including 10,400 individuals, of whom 7,000 are Jewish:
 - 6,100 Jewish adults
 - 900 Jewish children
 - 3,100 non-Jewish adults
 - 400 non-Jewish children
- The mean age of Jewish adults in Maine is 52, and the median age is 54, slightly older than the national median age of Jewish adults, 49. Including children, the mean age of all Jewish individuals in Maine is 43, and the median age is 47.
- Twenty-six percent of Jewish households in Maine include at least one child under age 18.
- The individual intermarriage rate (i.e., the proportion of married Jewish adults with a non-Jewish spouse) in Maine is 60%, higher than the national average of 42%.
- Fifty-three percent of Jewish adults in Maine do not identify with any particular denomination of Judaism. Three percent identify as Orthodox, 16% as Conservative, 23% as Reform, and 5% identify with other denominations.
- Seventy-seven percent of Jewish adults in Maine identify as Ashkenazi. Six percent identify as Sephardi, 1% as Mizrahi, and 2% with other Jewish ethnicities. Eight percent do not identify with any particular Jewish ethnic heritage, and 8% say they do not know their Jewish ethnicity. (Total exceeds 100% because respondents could identify with more than one option.)
- Seven percent of Jewish individuals in Maine identify with a racial category other than non-Hispanic white. However, only 3% identify as a Person of Color.
- Twelve percent of Jewish adults in Maine identify as LGBTQ+.
- Ten percent of Jewish adults in Maine were raised in a Russian-speaking household.
- Two percent of Jewish adults in Maine are Israeli citizens.
- Twenty-six percent of Jewish adults in Maine describe themselves politically as very liberal. Forty-two percent describe themselves as liberal, 25% as moderate, 6% as conservative, and 1% as very conservative.

- Twenty-two percent of Jewish adults in Maine were born in the state. Twenty-five percent of Jewish adults in Maine were raised primarily in the state. Nineteen percent of Jewish adults in Maine were both born and raised in the state.
- Forty-seven percent of Jewish adults in Maine have resided in their current county for 20 years or more. Sixteen percent have resided in their current county for 10-19 years, 14% for five to nine years, and 23% for less than five years.
- Eight percent of Jewish adults in Maine say they definitely plan to move away from their current homes in the next three years. Ten percent say they will probably move, 45% will probably not move, and 37% will definitely not move. Of those who definitely or probably plan to move, 64% plan to move within the state, 27% plan to move to another state in the United States, and 9% expect to move to another country.
- Eight percent of Jewish households in Maine live outside the state for part of the year.

Jewish population estimate

There are approximately 10,600 Jewish households in Maine, of which 6,500 are in Southern Maine and 4,100 are in the rest of the state (Table 2.1). These households include 28,100 individuals, of whom 19,000 are Jewish. In Southern Maine, Jewish households include 17,600 individuals, of whom 12,100 are Jewish. In the rest of Maine, Jewish households include 10,400 individuals, of whom 7,000 are Jewish.

The Jewish population comprises approximately 1.4% of the overall Maine population of 1,377,400 individuals.⁴ Jews constitute 2.2% of the population of Southern Maine and 0.9% of the population in the rest of the state.

Table 2.1. Maine Jewish community population estimates, 2024

	Overall	Southern Maine	Rest of Maine
Total people in Jewish households	28,100	17,600	10,400
Total Jewish households	10,600	6,500	4,100
Total Jews	19,000	12,100	7,000
Adults (ages 18+)	23,400	14,300	9,200
Jewish	15,300	9,300	6,100
Non-Jewish or unknown	8,100	5,000	3,100
Children (under age 18)	4,600	3,400	1,300
Jewish	3,700	2,800	900
Non-Jewish or unknown religion	900	500	400

People in Jewish households

Estimates of the size of the Jewish community rest on a set of fundamental questions about who is Jewish for the purposes of the study. Recent studies, 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, or “Jews of no religion” (JNR) if they do not adhere to any religion, but they consider themselves Jewish through some other means. Jews by religion tend to be 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 the Maine Jewish community could be compared to the population nationwide, a variant of Pew’s scheme was employed, supplemented by several other measures of identity. Also included in the Jewish population are those adults who indicate they are both Jewish and another religion; we refer to this category as “Jews of multiple religions” (JMR).

Children in this study are classified based on how the adult respondent describes them. When a respondent says a child’s parents are raising them exclusively Jewish, that child is classified as “Jewish” alone. If the parents are raising the child both Jewish and in another religion, the child is classified as “Jewish and another religion.” If the parents are not raising the child in any religion and do not otherwise consider the child to be Jewish, the child is classified as “no religion.” Finally, if the parents are raising the child in another religion and do not consider the child to be Jewish as well, the child is classified as “another religion.”

DEFINITIONS: WHO IS A JEW?

Definitions used in this report:



Jewish adults:

Identify as Jewish AND have Jewish background: at least one Jewish parent, raised Jewish, or converted to Judaism

- **Jewish by religion (JBR):** Religion is Jewish only
- **Jews of no religion (JNR):** No religion but ethnically or culturally Jewish
- **Jews of multiple religions (JMR):**
 - Two religions— Jewish and another religion
 - A religion other than Judaism and ethnically or culturally Jewish



Non-Jewish adults

- Identifies as Jewish and has no Jewish background:
 - No Jewish parent, was not raised Jewish, and did not convert
- Does not identify as Jewish and has Jewish background
- Does not identify as Jewish and has no Jewish background



Children (birth to age 17):

Are classified based on whether their parents consider them to be Jewish

- **Jewish:** Parents consider children Jewish exclusively (either by religion, culturally, or ethnically)
- **Jewish and another religion:** Parents consider children Jewish and another religion
- **No religion:** Parents consider children to have no religion
- **Another religion:** Parents consider children to be a religion other than Judaism



Jewish households: Includes at least one Jewish adult

Among Jewish adults in Maine, 69% (10,600 individuals) identify as JBR (Table 2.2). This proportion is similar between Southern Maine and the rest of the state, as well as to the proportion within the overall US Jewish population as reported by Pew (73%).⁵ Of the remaining Jewish adults, 19% identify as JNR (2,900 individuals), 11% identify as JMR (1,700 individuals), and about 1% (100 individuals) could not be categorized.⁶

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

Table 2.2. Jewish population of Maine

	Overall	Southern Maine	Rest of Maine
Jewish adults	15,300	9,300	6,100
JBR adults	10,600	6,400	4,200
JNR adults	2,900	1,800	1,100
JMR adults	1,700	900	800
Unknown Jewish adults	100	100	<50
Non-Jewish adults in Jewish households	8,100	5,000	3,100
Jewish children in Jewish households	3,700	2,800	900
Exclusively Jewish	2,700	2,100	600
Jewish and something else	1,100	700	300
Non-Jewish children in Jewish households	900	500	400
No religion	300	100	200
Exclusively another religion	100	<50	100
Unknown	500	400	100

Age and gender composition

The Maine Jewish community skews older than both the broader Maine population and the national Jewish population (Tables 2.3 and 2.4). Note that Table 2.3 includes the age breakdowns used throughout this report; Table 2.4 includes a separate breakdown produced for ease of comparison with national data.

The mean age of Jewish adults in Maine is 52, and the median age is 54; in comparison, the national median age of Jewish adults is 49.⁷ Including children in the analysis lowers the mean and median ages. The mean age of all Jewish individuals in Maine is 43, and the median age is 47.

Table 2.3. Age of Jewish adults in Maine

Jewish adults (%)	
	↓
18-39	26%
40-54	22%
55-64	19%
65-74	19%
75+	14%
Total	100

Table 2.4. Age of adults in Maine

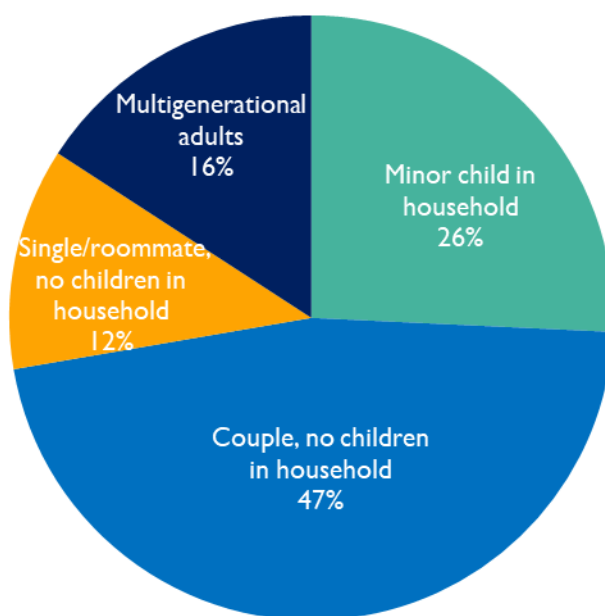
	Jewish Maine (%)	Maine (ACS 2023; %)	US Jews (Pew 2020; %)
	↓	↓	↓
18-34	20	24	28
35-49	18	22	23
50-64	29	26	20
65-74	19	17	17
75+	14	11	13
Total	100	100	100

The Jewish population (adults and children) is 49% male, 48% female, and 3% who prefer to describe their gender identity in another way.

Household composition

Twenty-six percent of Jewish households in Maine include children under age 18 (including single-parent, two-parent, or multigenerational households; Figure 2.1). Couples without children constitute 47% of households. Twelve percent of Jewish households are made up of single adults living alone or with roommates. Multigenerational households, defined as parents and adult children of any age living together, constitute the remaining 16% 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.

Figure 2.1. Household composition (% of Jewish households)



Thirty-six percent of Jewish adults in Maine over the age of 35 have no adult children, 19% have adult children living at home, and 56% have adult children living outside the home (Table 2.5).⁸ Of those who have adult children living outside the home, 25% have children living somewhere in Maine. Fourteen percent have children living in New York, 10% in Massachusetts, 5% in Florida, 3% in California, and 2% in New Hampshire. Seven percent have children who reside in Europe or somewhere else outside of the United States.

Table 2.5. Residences of adult children

	Jewish adults (%)
	↓
No adult children	34
Living at home	19
Living outside the home	56
Southern Maine	17
Rest of Maine	8
New York	14
Massachusetts	10
Florida	5
California	3
New Hampshire	2
Colorado	1
Illinois	1
Pennsylvania	1
Elsewhere in the United States	9
Europe	5
Rest of world	2

Note: Total exceeds 100% because respondents could select more than one option.

Inmarriage and intermarriage

Eighty-six percent of all Jewish adults in Maine are married, engaged, or partnered (Table 2.6). Of Jewish adults in Maine who are married, engaged, or partnered, 40% are inmarried and 60% are intermarried. The intermarriage rate (i.e., the proportion of Jewish adults with a non-Jewish spouse) is higher than the national average (42%).⁹

Table 2.6. Relationship status of Maine Jewish adults by age

	All Jewish adults (%)	Ages 18-39 (%)	Ages 40-54 (%)	Ages 55-64 (%)	Ages 65-74 (%)	Ages 75+ (%)
	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
Married/partnered	86	78	95	92	88	77
Religious composition among couples						
Inmarried	40	36	29	49	37	62
Intermarried	60	64	71	51	63	38
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

Definitions: Inmarriage and Inter-marriage

“Couples” and “marriages” include married and cohabitating 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



Non-Jewish



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

Jewish household 2: Inmarried



Jewish



Jewish

Jewish denominations

Denominational affiliation has historically been one of the primary indicators of Jewish identity and practice. In Maine, however, the largest denominational grouping, representing 53% of Jewish adults, is those who do not identify with any particular denomination. The share in this category is considerably higher than the national average (Table 2.7).¹⁰ Of Jewish adults who do identify with a denomination, the Reform movement claims the largest share, 23%, though this is smaller than the national average. Maine also has a smaller-than-average share of Orthodox Jews, comprising 3% of

Jewish adults in the area compared to 9% nationally. Another 16% of Jewish adults identify as Conservative, and 5% identify with another denomination.

Table 2.7. Denomination of Jewish adults in Maine and the United States

	Maine 2024 (%)	US Jews 2020 (%)
	↓	↓
Orthodox	3	9
Conservative	16	17
Reform	23	37
Other denomination	5	4
No denomination	53	32
Total	100	100

Subpopulations

Seventy-seven percent of Jewish adults in Maine identify as Ashkenazi (i.e., predominantly of Eastern or Central European descent; Table 2.8). Six percent of Jewish adults identify as Sephardi (i.e., descended from Spanish or Portuguese Jews), and 1% identify as Mizrahi (i.e., of Middle Eastern Jewish ancestry, such as Persian, Iraqi, or Yemenite Jews). Two percent identify with some other ancestry, and the remainder identify with either no particular Jewish ethnicity (8%) or say they do not know their Jewish ethnicity (8%). Table 2.8 also lists the proportions of Jewish households that include at least one Jewish adult with any given Jewish ethnicity, as 9% of Jewish households contain individuals whose Jewish ethnic identifications are not identical.

Table 2.8. Jewish ethnicity

	Jewish adults (%)	Jewish households that include someone with this ethnicity (%)
	↓	↓
Ashkenazi	77	79
Sephardi	6	9
Mizrahi	1	<1
Other	2	4
None, no particular heritage	8	9
Don't know	8	7

Note: Totals exceed 100% because respondents could select more than one option.

Ninety-three percent of Jewish individuals in Maine identify solely as white and non-Hispanic (Table 2.9). Six percent of Jewish individuals in Maine 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 racial origin) or as Hispanic. However, only 3% of Jewish individuals in Maine identify as a Person of Color. Among Jewish children, the proportion who identify with a non-white racial identity is higher than that among Jewish adults, but the proportion who identify as Hispanic is lower than that among Jewish adults.

Table 2.9. Race and ethnicity

	Jewish individuals (%) ↓	Jewish adults (%) ↓	Jewish children (%) ↓	All individuals in Jewish households (%) ↓	Of Jewish households, at least one person has this identity (%) ↓
Self-identifying Person of Color	3	3	1	3	8
Combined race and ethnicity					
Single-race, non-Hispanic white	93	94	93	94	97
Single-race, Hispanic white	3	3	1	2	5
Any non-white racial identity, including multiracial, non-Hispanic	3	3	6	4	5
Any non-white racial identity, including multiracial, Hispanic	<1	<1	0	1	1
Total	100	100	100	100	

Twelve percent of Jewish adults in Maine identify as LGBTQ+, 10% were raised in a Russian-speaking household (but not necessarily in Russia or the former Soviet Union), and 2% are Israeli citizens (Table 2.10).

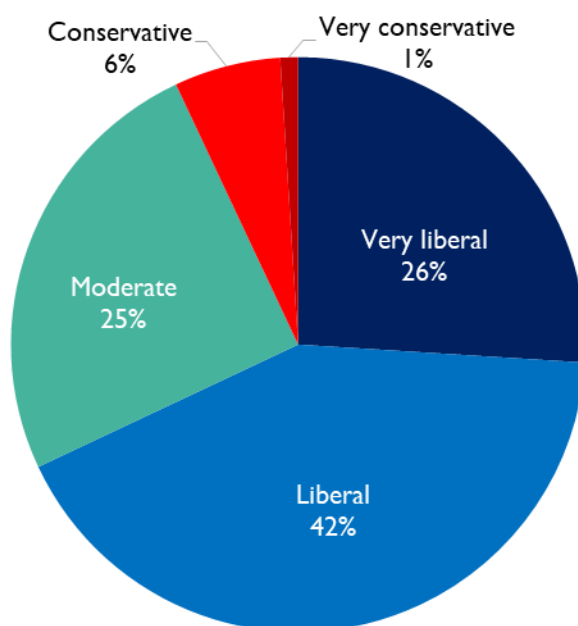
Table 2.10. Demographic group identities

	All Jewish adults (%) ↓
LGBTQ+	12
Russian-speaking Jews	10
Israeli citizens	2

Political views

The majority of Jewish adults in Maine described their political views as “very liberal” (26%) or “liberal” (42%; Figure 2.2). Twenty-five percent identified as “moderate,” 6% as “conservative,” and 1% reported being “very conservative.”¹¹ Nationally, 18% of Jewish adults identify as “very liberal,” 32% as “liberal,” 32% as “moderate,” 12% as “conservative,” and 3% as “very conservative.”

Figure 2.2. Political orientation of Maine Jewish adults



Geographic distribution

The Jewish community of Maine can be divided by regions based on county (Table 2.11 and Figure 2.3). A detailed breakdown of how respondents were classified into regions can be found in the methodological appendix (Appendix A).

Table 2.11. List of regions

Region	Included counties
Southern Maine	Cumberland, Sagadahoc, York
Rest of Maine	Androscoggin, Aroostook, Franklin, Hancock, Kennebec, Knox, Lincoln, Oxford, Penobscot, Piscataquis, Somerset, Waldo, Washington

Figures 2.3 and 2.4 illustrate the geographic distribution of Jewish households in Maine. On each map, each red dot represents 25 Jewish households. The dots are randomly placed within the ZIP codes where those households reside; they do not reflect perfectly the exact location of respondents' residences. Their placement reflects both the aggregation of survey data and efforts to protect the identities of survey respondents. The absence of any dots in a particular ZIP code does not necessarily mean that there are no Jewish households within that ZIP code. Given the nature of survey samples, the absence of a dot should be interpreted to mean only that *very few* Jewish households reside in a particular area. Similarly, if a ZIP code appears to have an implausibly large number of dots, it may indicate that residents of that ZIP code were more eager than average to participate in the survey, or that a single respondent from that ZIP code stands in mathematically for a large number of Jewish households in Maine. Readers are advised not to accord too much weight to absolute numbers of dots in particular ZIP codes and focus instead on the relative distribution of the dots across the full map.

Figure 2.3. Geographic distribution of the Maine Jewish community

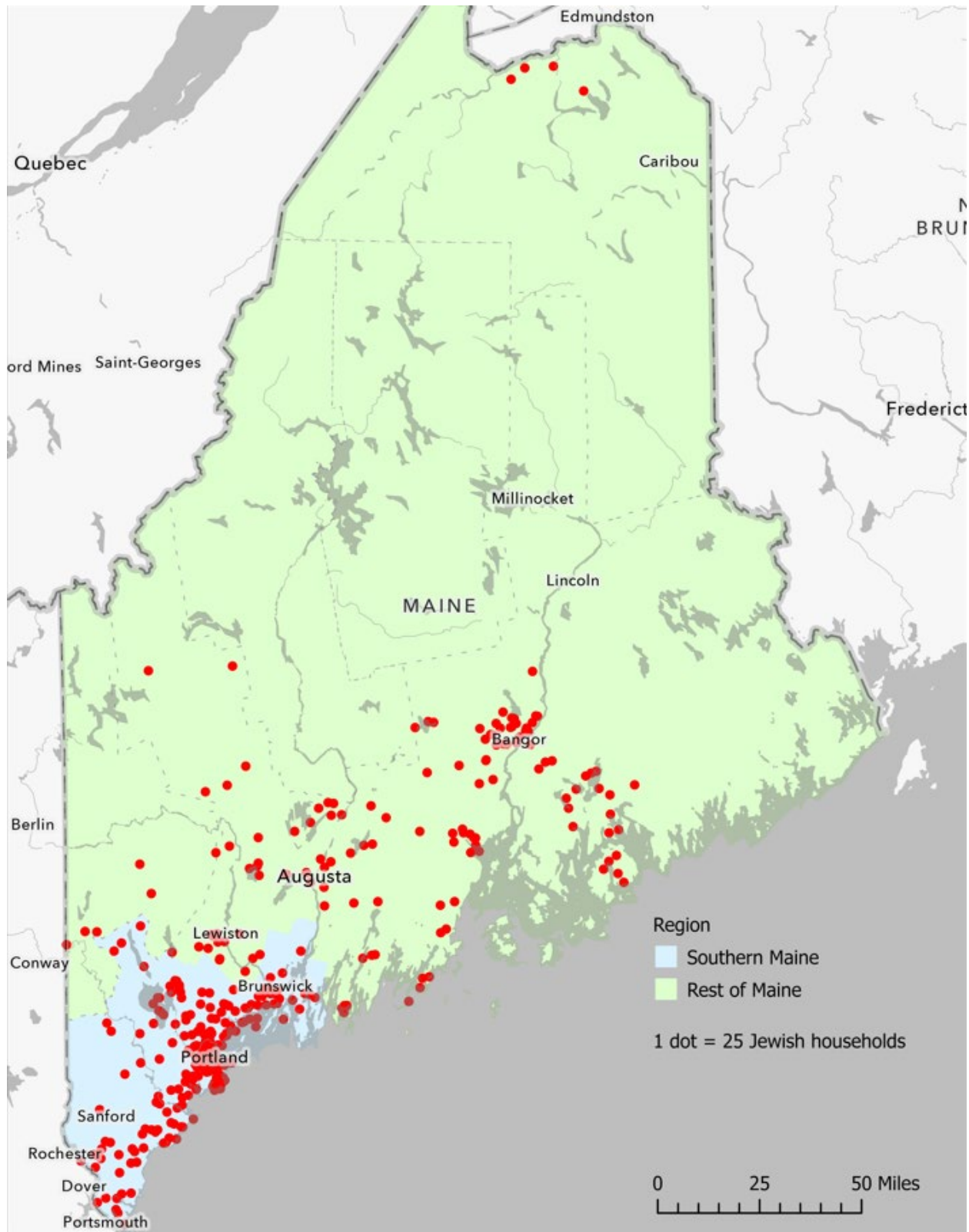
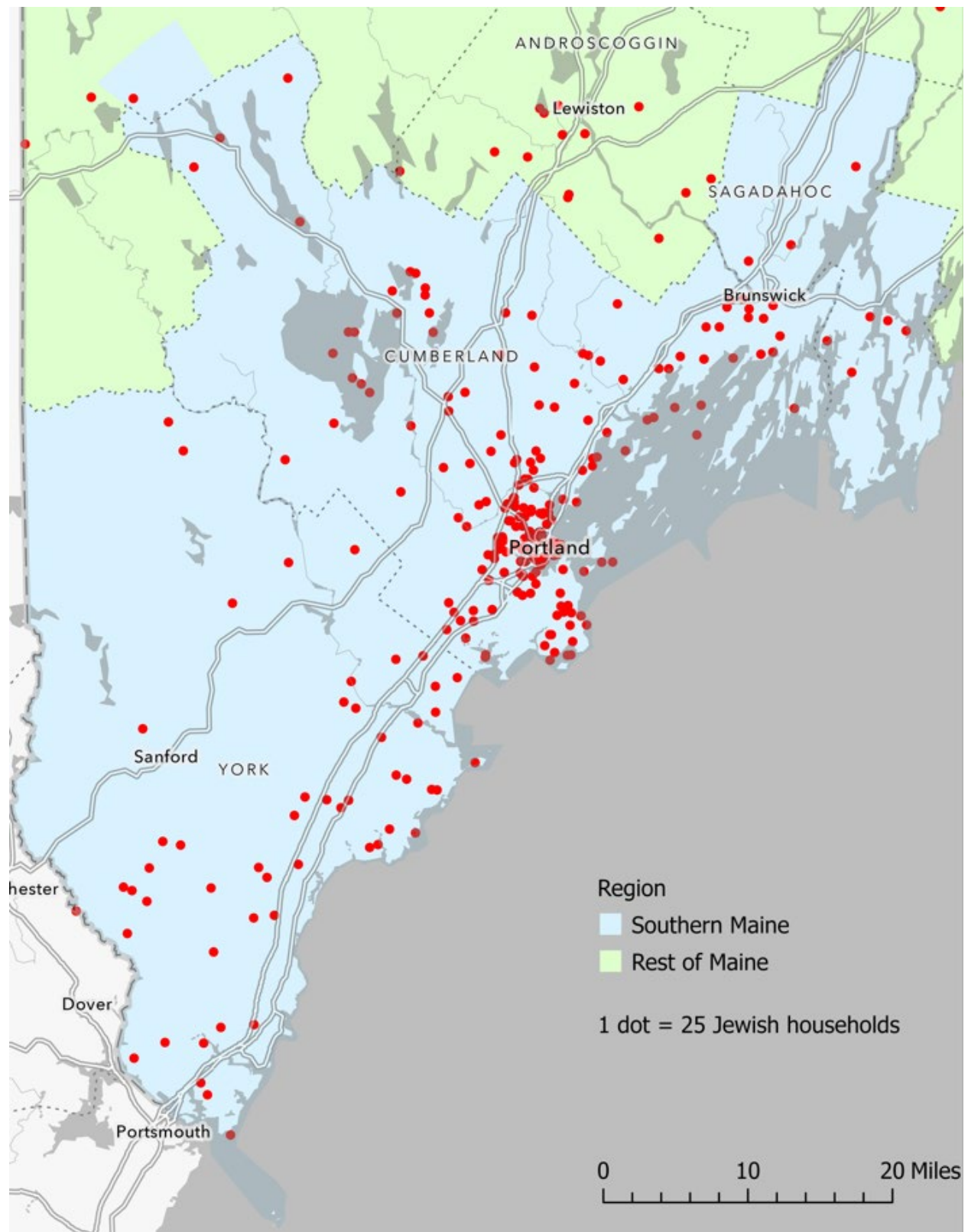


Figure 2.4. Geographic distribution of the Southern Maine Jewish community



Sixty-one percent of Jewish households are in Southern Maine, and 39% are in the rest of the state (Table 2.12). Three quarters of Jewish children reside in Southern Maine (76%), while the remaining quarter reside in the rest of the state (24%).

Table 2.12. Distribution of Jewish households and Jewish individuals across geographic regions

	Jewish households (%)	All individuals in Jewish households (%)	All Jewish individuals (%)	Jewish children (%)
	↓	↓	↓	↓
Southern Maine	61	63	63	76
Rest of Maine	39	36	37	24
Total	100	100	100	100

There are also differences in the geographic distribution of the population by age (Table 2.13). Although both regions have similar shares of Jewish adults ages 18-39, Southern Maine has a larger share of Jewish adults ages 40-54 (24%). The rest of Maine skews older than Southern Maine, with 57% of Jewish adults being ages 55 and older, compared to 50% of those living in Southern Maine.

Table 2.13. Ages of Jewish adults by region

	Ages 18-39 (%)	Ages 40-54 (%)	Ages 55-64 (%)	Ages 65-74 (%)	Ages 75+ (%)	Total
	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	
Southern Maine	26	24	18	19	13	100
Rest of Maine	26	18	20	22	15	100

Length of residence and mobility

Twenty-two percent of Jewish adults in Maine were born in the state, with 13% being born in Southern Maine and 9% being born in the rest of the state (Table 2.14). The most common birthplaces for Jewish adults living in Maine are New York (19%) and Massachusetts (15%). Other common birthplaces include California (4%), Connecticut (4%), New Jersey (4%), Illinois (3%), and Pennsylvania (2%). Five percent were born in another country.

Table 2.14. Respondent born in...

	All Jewish adults (%)
	↓
Maine	22
Southern Maine	13
Rest of Maine	9
Rest of the United States	74
New York	19
Massachusetts	15
California	4
Connecticut	4
New Jersey	4
Illinois	3
Pennsylvania	2
Elsewhere in the United States	22
Another country	5
Total	100

One quarter of Jewish adults in Maine were primarily raised in the state, with 13% raised in Southern Maine and 12% raised in the rest of the state (Table 2.15). Fifteen percent were raised in Massachusetts, and a similar share was raised in New York. Four percent were raised in another country. Unsurprisingly, there is a significant overlap between those born in Maine and those raised in Maine (Table 2.16).

Among Jewish adults living in Southern Maine, 20% were raised in Southern Maine, and 4% were raised in the rest of the state. Seventeen percent were raised in New York, 15% were raised in Massachusetts, 8% in California, 6% in New Jersey, and 4% were raised in another country.

Among Jewish adults living in the Rest of Maine region, 23% were raised in that region, and 3% were raised in Southern Maine. Seventeen percent were raised in Massachusetts, 14% were raised in New York, 5% in Connecticut, 4% in Pennsylvania, and 4% were raised in another country.

Table 2.15. Primarily raised in...

	All Jewish adults (%)	All Jewish adults in Southern Maine (%)	All Jewish adults in the rest of Maine (%)
	↓	↓	↓
Maine	25	24	26
Southern Maine	13	20	3
Rest of Maine	12	4	23
Rest of the United States	71	72	70
Massachusetts	15	15	17
New York	15	17	14
California	5	8	2
New Jersey	5	6	3
Connecticut	4	4	5
Illinois	3	2	3
New Hampshire	3	4	<1
Pennsylvania	3	3	4
Maryland	2	3	1
Elsewhere in the United States	16	12	22
Another country	4	4	4
Total	100	100	100

Table 2.16. Born/raised in Maine or elsewhere

	All Jewish adults (%)	All Jewish adults in Southern Maine (%)	All Jewish adults in the rest of Maine (%)
	↓	↓	↓
Born but not raised in Maine	2	3	1
Raised but not born in Maine	6	5	7
Both born and raised in Maine	19	19	19
Neither born nor raised in Maine	73	73	73
Total	100	100	100

Twenty-eight percent of Jewish adults in Maine have lived in the state their entire adult lives, aside from college or graduate school, including 25% of Jewish adults in Southern Maine and 34% in the rest of the state. As might be expected, the proportion is even higher for Jewish adults who were both born and raised in Maine (72%) but lower for those who were neither born nor raised in Maine (16%; Table 2.17).

Table 2.17. Lived in Maine all of adult life (aside from college or graduate school)

	All Jewish adults (%)	All Jewish adults in Southern Maine (%)	All Jewish adults in the rest of Maine (%)
	↓	↓	↓
If born or raised in Maine	36	27	50
If both born and raised in Maine	72	69	77
If neither born nor raised in Maine	16	13	20

Nearly half of Jewish adults in Maine (47%) have lived in their current county for 20 years or longer, and another 16% have lived in their current county between 10-19 years (Table 2.18). However, there are also many newcomers; over a third of Jewish adults have moved to their current county within the past decade, including 23% who have lived in their current county for fewer than five years.

Among Jewish adults in Southern Maine, 44% have lived in their current county for 20 years or longer, and 19% have lived in their current county between 10-19 years. Thirty-seven percent have moved to their current county within the past decade, including 22% who have lived in their current county for fewer than five years.

Among Jewish adults in the rest of Maine, 54% have lived in their current county for 20 years or longer, and 10% have lived in their current county between 10-19 years. Thirty-six percent have moved to their current county within the past decade, including 24% who have lived in their current county for fewer than five years.

Table 2.18. Length of residence in current county

	All Jewish adults (%)	All Jewish adults in Southern Maine (%)	All Jewish adults in the rest of Maine (%)
	↓	↓	↓
0-4 years	23	22	24
5-9 years	14	15	12
10-19 years	16	19	10
20-29 years	25	18	36
30-39 years	9	8	10
40-49 years	6	8	4
50-59 years	2	2	2
60+ years	5	8	2
Total	100	100	100

Among Jewish adults in Maine who have lived in their current county for less than 10 years, one quarter (24%) moved there from elsewhere in Maine (Table 2.19). Sixteen percent moved from Massachusetts, 8% from New York, and 6% from California. Nearly half of these Jewish adults

(46%) moved to their current county from a different part of the United States, and less than 1% moved from another country.

Among Jewish adults in Southern Maine who have lived in their current county for less than 10 years, 9% moved from elsewhere in Southern Maine, and 9% moved from the rest of the state. Eighteen percent of these Jewish adults moved from Massachusetts, 7% from New York, and 8% from California. Half of these Jewish adults moved to their current county from a different part of the United States, and less than 1% moved from another country.

Among Jewish adults in the Rest of Maine region who have lived in their current county for less than 10 years, 13% moved from elsewhere in the region and 20% moved from Southern Maine. Fourteen percent of these Jewish adults moved from Massachusetts, 10% from New York, and 3% from California. Thirty-nine percent of these Jewish adults moved to their current county from a different part of the United States, and 1% moved from another country.

Table 2.19. Moved from... (Jewish adults who have lived in their current county for less than 10 years)

	All Jewish adults (%)	All Jewish adults in Southern Maine (%)	All Jewish adults in the rest of Maine (%)
	↓	↓	↓
Southern Maine	14	9	20
Rest of Maine	10	9	13
Massachusetts	16	18	14
New York	8	7	10
California	6	8	3
Elsewhere in the United States	46	50	39
Another country	<1	<1	1
Total	100	100	100

Jewish adults who have moved to their current county within the last 10 years cited a variety of reasons for doing so (Table 2.20). The most common reasons cited include quality of life (48%), natural features of the area (31%), being close to family (26%), for a job or career (26%), and cost of living (21%).

Among Jewish adults in Southern Maine who have lived in their current county for less than 10 years, 47% cited the quality of life, 33% cited the natural features of the area, 33% cited being close to family, and 25% cited moving for a job or career. Only 2% cited the quality of the local Jewish community.

Among Jewish adults in the Rest of Maine region who have lived in their current county for less than 10 years, 48% cited the quality of life, 28% cited the natural features of the area, 28% cited moving for a job or career, 27% cited cost of living, and 18% cited being close to family. Ten percent of these Jewish adults cited the quality of the local Jewish community.

Table 2.20. Primary reasons for moving to current county

	All Jewish adults who have lived in current county <10 years (%)	All Jewish adults in Southern Maine who have lived in current county <10 years (%)	All Jewish adults in the rest of Maine who have lived in current county <10 years (%)
	↓	↓	↓
Quality of life	48	47	48
Natural features of the area	31	33	28
Cost of living	21	18	27
To be close to family	26	33	18
Job or career	26	25	28
Education	9	7	10
Quality of the local Jewish community	5	2	10
Medical care or other social services	1	2	0
Other	18	18	20

Note: Totals exceed 100% because respondents could select more than one option.

Eighteen percent of Jewish adults said they definitely or probably will move away from their current home in the next three years (Table 2.21). Seventeen percent of Jewish adults in Southern Maine said they definitely or probably will move away from their current home in the next three years, along with 18% of those in the rest of the state.

Table 2.21. Plan to move away from current home

	All Jewish adults (%)	All Jewish adults in Southern Maine (%)	All Jewish adults in the rest of Maine (%)
	↓	↓	↓
Definitely yes	8	6	10
Probably yes	10	11	8
Probably not	45	44	47
Definitely not	37	40	34
Total	100	100	100

Of those who said they are planning to move away, over half said they plan to move to a different address in Maine, with 27% planning to move somewhere in Southern Maine and 37% planning to move somewhere in the rest of the state (Table 2.22). One quarter of these Jewish adults said they plan to move elsewhere in the United States (27%), and 9% plan to move to another country.

Among Jewish adults in Southern Maine planning to move away from their current home, almost half plan to move to a different address in Southern Maine (47%) and 16% plan to move somewhere in the rest of the state. About one third plan to move elsewhere in the United States (32%), and 5% plan to move to another country.

Among Jewish adults in the Rest of Maine region planning to move away from their current home, 61% plan to move to a different address within the region, and 5% plan to move to Southern Maine. Eighteen percent plan to move elsewhere in the United States, and 16% plan to move to another country.

Table 2.22. Plan to move where... (of Jewish adults who plan to move)

	All Jewish adults (%)	All Jewish adults in Southern Maine (%)	All Jewish adults in the rest of Maine (%)
	↓	↓	↓
Southern Maine	27	47	5
Rest of Maine	37	16	61
Elsewhere in the United States	27	32	18
Another country	9	5	16
Total	100	100	100

Among those planning to move away, the most commonly cited reason is cost of living (25%; Table 2.23). Seventeen percent said they are moving for a job or career, 16% said they are moving to be close to family who live elsewhere, and 9% said they are moving due to the quality of Jewish life. Almost half indicated they had another reason for moving.

Among those in Southern Maine who are planning to move, the most commonly cited reason is for a job or career (27%). Twenty-one percent said they are moving due to cost of living, 9% said they are moving to be close to family who live elsewhere, and 4% cited the quality of Jewish life.

Among those in the rest of the state who are planning to move, the most commonly cited reason is cost of living (35%). Fifteen percent said they are moving to be close to family who live elsewhere, 5% said they are moving for a job or career, and 11% said they are moving due to the quality of Jewish life.

Table 2.23. Primary reasons to consider moving

	All Jewish adults who plan to move away (%)	All Jewish adults in Southern Maine who plan to move away (%)	All Jewish adults in the rest of Maine who plan to move away (%)
	↓	↓	↓
For cost of living	25	21	35
For a job or career	17	27	5
To be close to family who live elsewhere	16	9	15
Quality of Jewish life	9	4	11
Other	49	54	44

Note: Totals exceed 100% because respondents could select more than one option.

Eight percent of Maine Jewish households live outside the state for part of the year, including 9% of Jewish households in Southern Maine and 7% of households in the rest of the state.

Among Jewish households who live outside Maine for part of the year, 64% consider their Maine address to be their permanent residence (Table 2.24). Twenty-seven percent of these Jewish households consider their Maine address to be a vacation or seasonal home, 3% consider it a weekend getaway, 2% consider it a temporary residence while attending school or working in their current position, and 4% consider it to be something else.

Among Jewish households in Southern Maine who live outside the state for part of the year, 62% consider their Maine address to be their permanent residence. Twenty-one percent of these Jewish households consider their Maine address to be a vacation or seasonal home, 7% consider it a

temporary residence while in school or for their current position, 5% consider it a weekend getaway, and 5% consider it something else.

Among Jewish households in the rest of the state who live outside of Maine for part of the year, only 47% consider their Maine address to be their permanent residence. A majority of these households consider their Maine address to be a vacation or seasonal home (51%), while 2% consider it to be something else.

Table 2.24. Consider current home in Maine to be

	All Jewish households who live outside Maine for part of the year (%)	All Jewish adults in Southern Maine who live outside Maine for part of the year (%)	All Jewish adults in the rest of Maine who live outside Maine for part of the year (%)
	↓	↓	↓
Permanent residence	64	62	47
Your vacation or seasonal home	27	21	51
Your weekend getaway	3	5	0
Your temporary residence while in school or for your current position	2	7	<1
Something else	4	5	2
Total	100	100	100

CHAPTER 3. PATTERNS OF JEWISH ENGAGEMENT

Chapter highlights

Members of the Jewish community of Maine exhibit a variety of types of Jewish identification and means of engagement in Jewish life. Examining the ways that 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 introduces and discusses an “Index of Jewish Engagement,” created for the Maine Jewish community.

In this chapter, we recommend that readers focus on the behaviors and attitudes typical of each engagement group. Later chapters and Appendix A will provide details regarding how these groups differ across survey items.

- The Index of Jewish Engagement focuses on Jewish behaviors—the ways in which individuals occupy and involve themselves in Jewish life in Maine—not on self-identification.
- The Index can be used to identify opportunities to improve communal planning based on people’s different needs and interests.
- Four distinct patterns of engagement emerge in Maine:
 - Minimally Involved (42% of Jewish adults): Characterized by minimal participation in Jewish life.
 - Connected (27% of Jewish adults): Characterized by high participation in holiday and religious-based activities.
 - Affiliated (17% of Jewish adults): Characterized by active participation in many aspects of Jewish life.
 - Immersed (14% of Jewish adults): Characterized by frequent engagement in nearly all aspects of Jewish life.
- Engagement groups include people of all ages and denominational identities.
- Demographic characteristics are related to membership in these four engagement groups.

Index of Jewish Engagement

One of the purposes of the Index of Jewish Engagement is to demonstrate the extent and types of participation in Jewish life in Maine. Throughout the remainder of this report, we present data about individual measures of Jewish engagement, such as synagogue membership, program participation, and altruistic behaviors. One subgroup of the population, such as parents with children, may have high levels of participation in one type of Jewish behavior (e.g., lighting Shabbat candles) but lower participation in another (e.g., donating to Jewish organizations), and another subgroup, such as young adults, may have the opposite pattern. By identifying the patterns that develop around measures of Jewish engagement, we can better understand the myriad ways Jewish individuals

express their Jewish identities and the potential constituencies that exist for different types of Jewish connections.

In Maine, we identified four predominant categories of Jewish engagement that describe distinct patterns of participation in Jewish life. This chapter explains how we created these categories and describes the most prevalent Jewish behaviors and attitudes that characterize each grouping.

Background: Classifications of Jewish engagement

The best-known system for categorizing Jewish identity is denominational affiliation. In the past, Jewish denominational categories closely correlated with measures of Jewish engagement, including behavior 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—including, as noted in Chapter 2, 53% of Jewish adults in Maine. Thus, denominational labels are limited in their utility to convey descriptions of behavior and attitudes.

Measures of Jewish engagement

We specifically designed the Index of Jewish Engagement to identify opportunities for better measurement of engagement for groups with different needs and interests. The Index focuses on behaviors—the ways in which individuals spend their time and involve themselves in Jewish life. Such behaviors are concrete and measurable expressions of Jewish identity. Behaviors, in many cases, correlate with demographic characteristics, backgrounds, 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 skill 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 this typology is inclusive of a variety of 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: holiday behaviors, ritual behaviors, organizational behaviors, and individual behaviors. The behavioral measures include:

- **Holiday behaviors:** Holiday celebrations, such as attending or hosting a Passover seder, fasting for Yom Kippur, 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 or association.
- **Ritual behaviors:** Marking Shabbat, attending religious services, attending High Holiday services, keeping kosher at home.
- **Organizational behaviors:** Belonging to a congregation, belonging to Jewish organizations, belonging to informal Jewish groups, participating in Jewish programs often in the past year, volunteering for Jewish organizations in the past year, donating to Jewish organizations in the past year.
- **Individual behaviors:** Following news about Israel very closely, talking about Jewish topics often, reading Jewish publications often, engaging with Jewish-focused culture often, eating

Jewish foods often, studying Jewish texts often, interacting on social media about Jewish life or content.

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 four unique patterns of Jewish engagement.

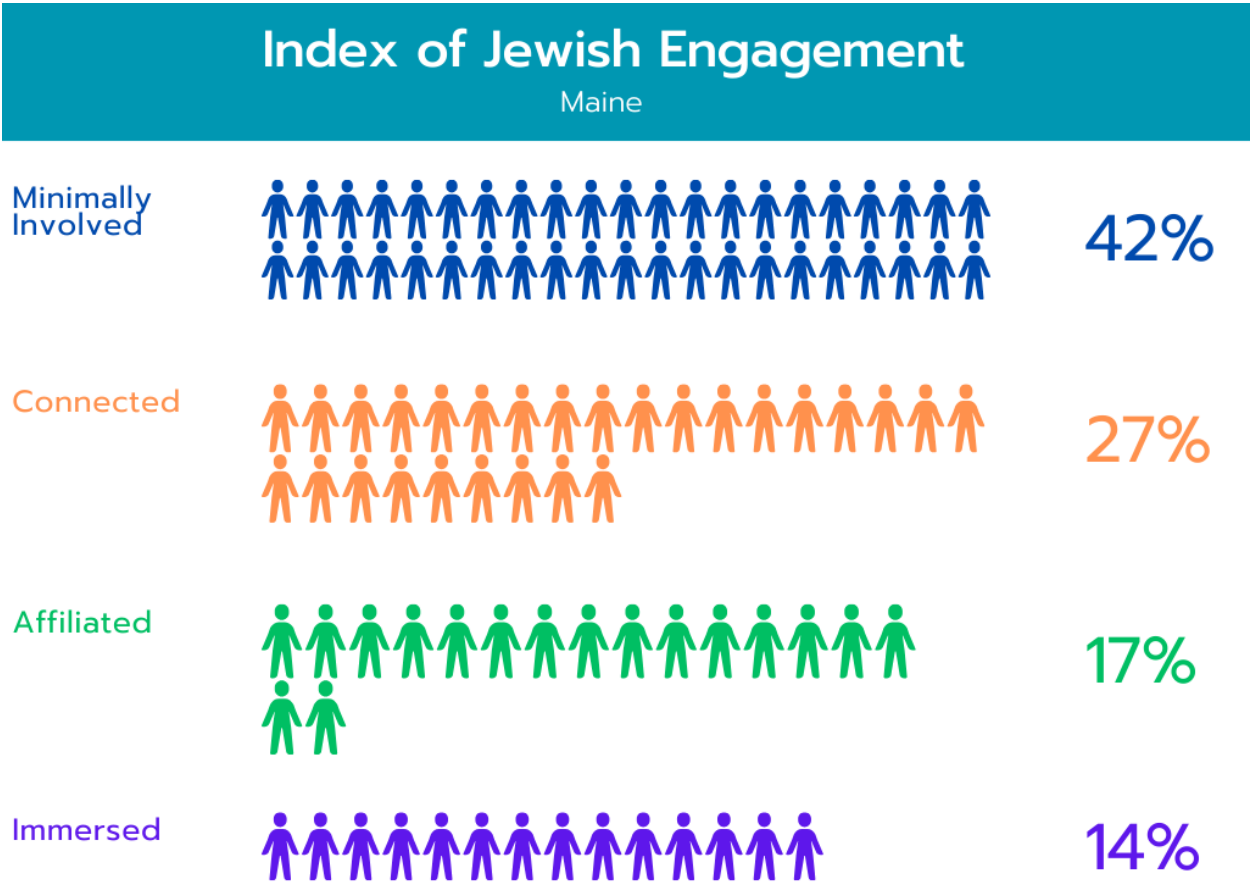
How we developed these categories

Survey respondents answered questions about their Jewish behaviors; based on their responses, we identified the four 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 Maine Jewish community. 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 four 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.

Figure 3.1. Jewish engagement



Jewish behaviors and Jewish engagement

The four 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 engagement patterns vary widely, but all patterns include at least some behaviors that represent a connection to Jewish life. Table 3.1 shows the proportion of people in each engagement group that engages in the listed behavior. In this table, the darker the box, the higher the proportion of people that engages in that behavior.

The “**Minimally Involved**” group represents 42% of Maine Jewish adults, the largest share among the engagement groups. This group marginally engages in Jewish activities, holidays, or institutional Judaism. Their frequent Jewish behaviors include lighting Hanukkah candles (49%) or interacting on social media about Jewish life or content (37%). The “**Connected**” group, 27% of the Jewish adults in Maine, exhibit high participation in holiday and religious-based activities. Nearly all members (97%) of this group lit Hanukkah candles in 2023, and 88% attended religious services at least once in the past year.

The remaining Jewish adult population is split between the **“Affiliated”** group (17%) and the **“Immersed”** group (14%). The Affiliated group actively participates in many aspects of Jewish life, though fewer than half (41%) are members of a congregation. Ninety percent of this group lit Hanukkah candles, 84% talk about Jewish topics often, and 79% follow news about Israel closely. The Immersed group engages frequently in nearly all aspects of Jewish life, from attending services ever in the past year (100%) and having a Passover seder (99%) to volunteering in a Jewish organizational in the past year (79%; Table 3.1).

Table 3.1. Jewish behaviors and engagement

	All Jewish adults (%)	Minimally Involved (%)	Connected (%)	Affiliated (%)	Immersed (%)
	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
Holiday behaviors					
Passover seder, 2024	51	20	81	82	99
Hanukkah candles, 2023	76	49	97	90	99
Fast on Yom Kippur, 2023	27	3	44	52	87
Ritual behaviors					
Kosher, at home	3	0	<1	2	29
High Holiday services, 2023	74	0	68	84	99
Services, ever in past year	47	9	88	74	100
Monthly or more	13	0	20	6	81
Mark Shabbat, ever in past year	50	13	71	81	100
(Almost) every week	14	0	12	17	64
Organizational behaviors					
Congregation member	27	<1	50	41	78
Organization member	12	<1	5	37	30
Informal group member	13	1	18	28	29
Volunteer for Jewish org	19	1	21	36	79
Donated to Jewish org	43	17	63	81	92
Participate in organized Jewish programs, often	8	1	1	5	39
Individual behaviors					
Follow news about Israel very closely	31	21	25	79	56
Talk about Jewish topics, often	41	25	35	84	91
Read Jewish publications, often	20	2	2	72	69
Engage with Jewish culture, often	23	2	<1	65	68
Eat Jewish food, often	24	5	21	40	76
Study Jewish texts, often	10	0	<1	5	65
Engage with Jewish content on social media, ever in past year	58	37	64	86	84

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

The patterns of Jewish engagement are associated with some, but not all, demographic characteristics. Figures 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5, and 3.6 show the distribution of selected demographic characteristics within the Jewish engagement categories in comparison to the overall Jewish adult population. To best understand demographic patterns, it is useful to compare the distribution of each of the engagement groups to that of the overall adult Jewish population, shown in the top bar

of each figure. This comparison allows one to observe how, if at all, each engagement group differs from the overall adult population.

There are no significant differences between the engagement groups when it comes to a person's age (Figure 3.2) or their region in Maine (Figure 3.3). However, it is notable, given that members of the Affiliated group are distinguished by their relatively high rate of affiliation with Jewish organizations other than synagogues, that there is a major non-synagogue organization in Portland, the Jewish Community Alliance of Southern Maine (JCA), that members of the community can join and through which they can participate in a wide array of activities.

Figure 3.2. Jewish engagement by age

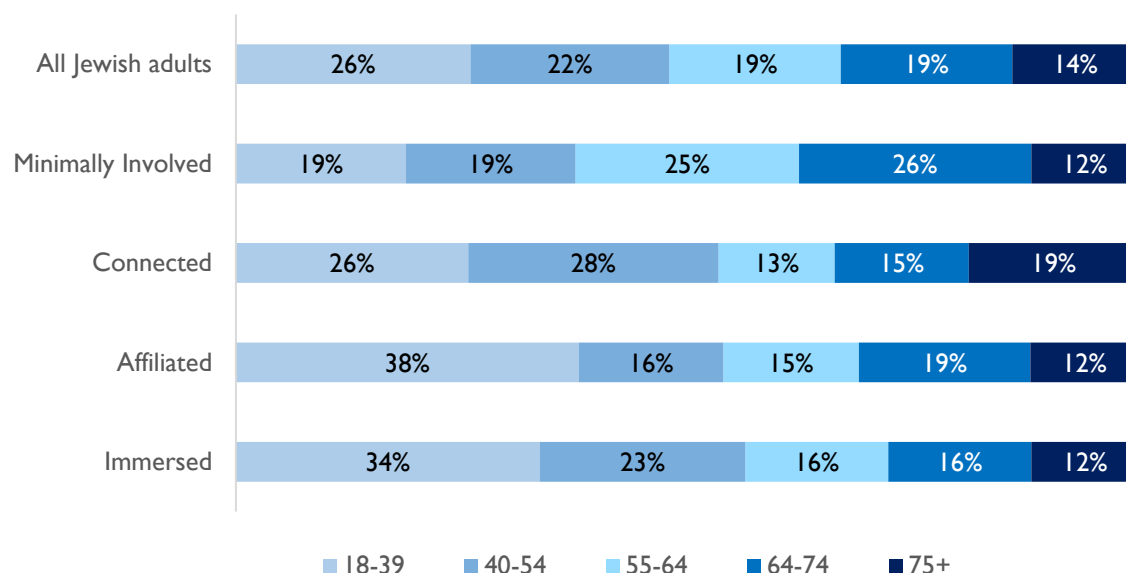
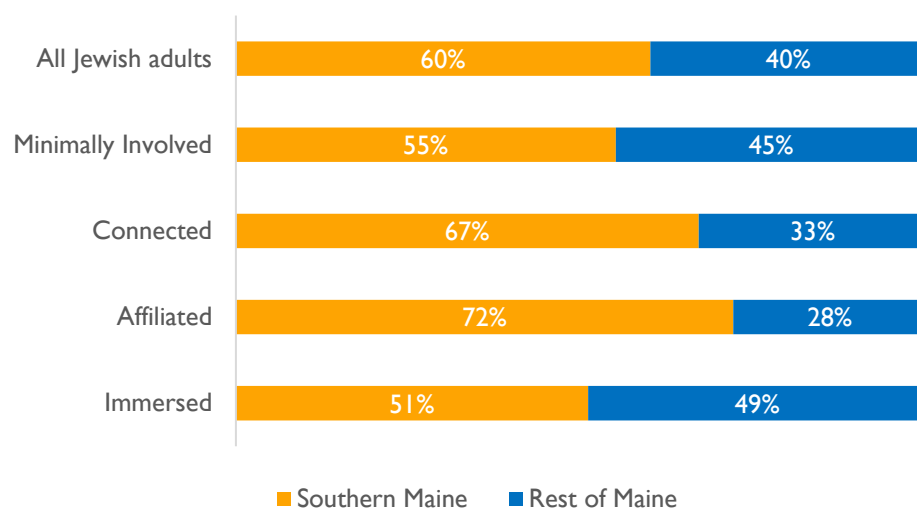


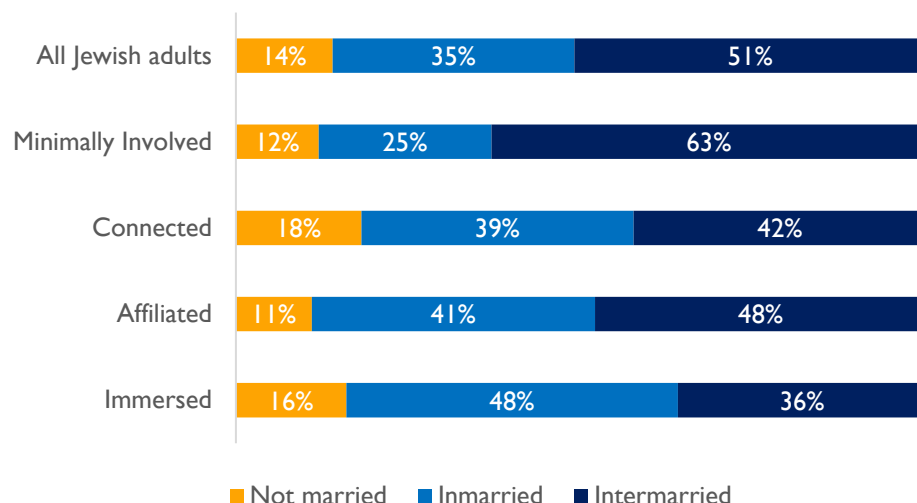
Figure 3.3. Jewish engagement by region



Although there are similar shares of each engagement group across age and region, there are significant differences between inmarried, intermarried, and not-married households. Nearly two

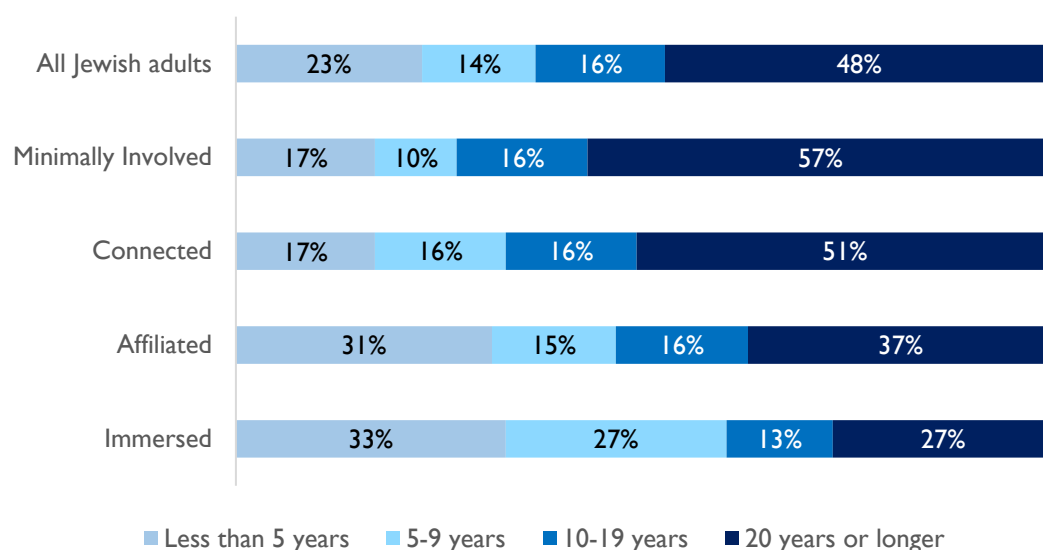
thirds of Jewish adults in the Minimally Involved group (63%) are intermarried, compared to half or fewer of the other three groups (Figure 3.4).¹²

Figure 3.4. Jewish engagement by marriage type*



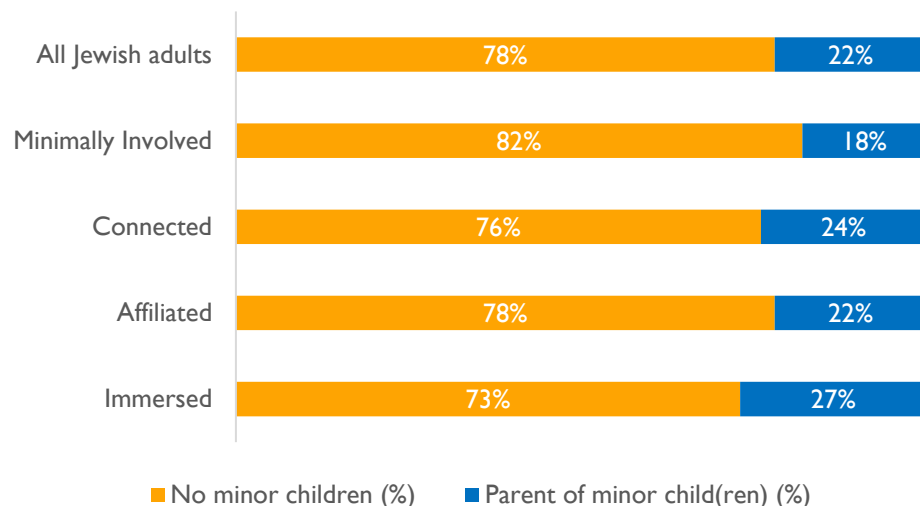
More Jewish adults in the Minimally Involved and Connected groups have lived in their current residences long term than have members of the Affiliated and Immersed groups. Half or more of Jewish adults in the Minimally Involved (57%) and Connected groups (51%) have lived in their current residences for 20 years or longer, compared to 37% of the Affiliated group and 27% of the Immersed group (Figure 3.5).

Figure 3.5. Jewish engagement by length of residence*



There are no significant differences between the engagement groups based on whether or not there are minor children in the household (Figure 3.6).

Figure 3.6. Jewish engagement by parent status

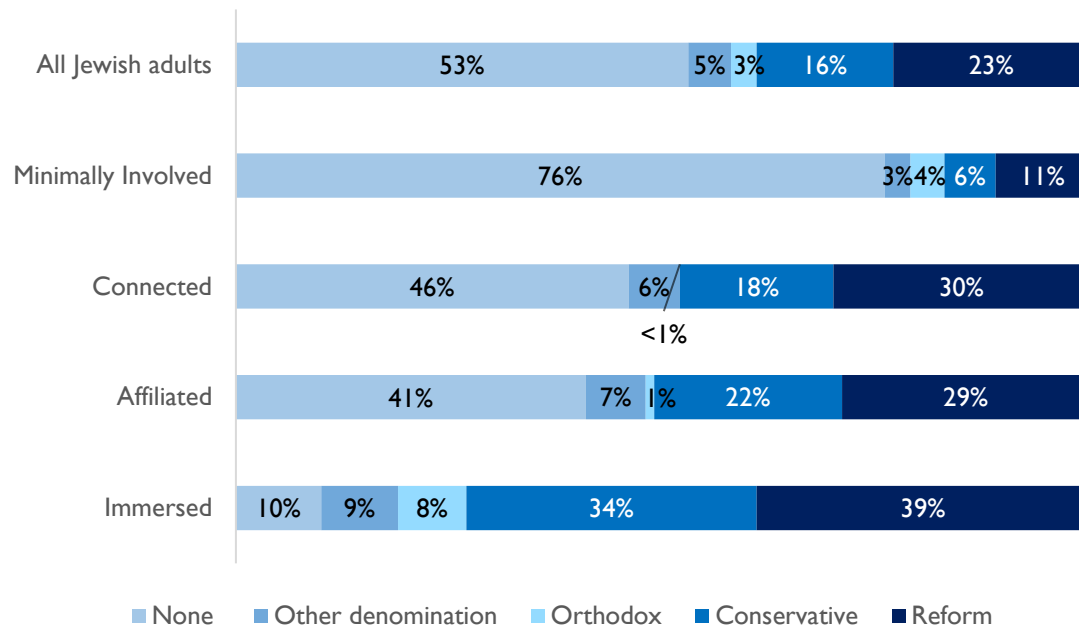


Jewish background and Jewish engagement

The following figures describe the Jewish identity and Jewish backgrounds of those in each Jewish engagement category. Jewish denomination is related to Jewish engagement but is not identical, and an increasing number of Jews do not affiliate with a particular denomination—including about half of Jewish adults (53%) in Maine. Thus, denominational labels are limited in their ability to convey behavior and attitudes (Figure 3.7).¹³

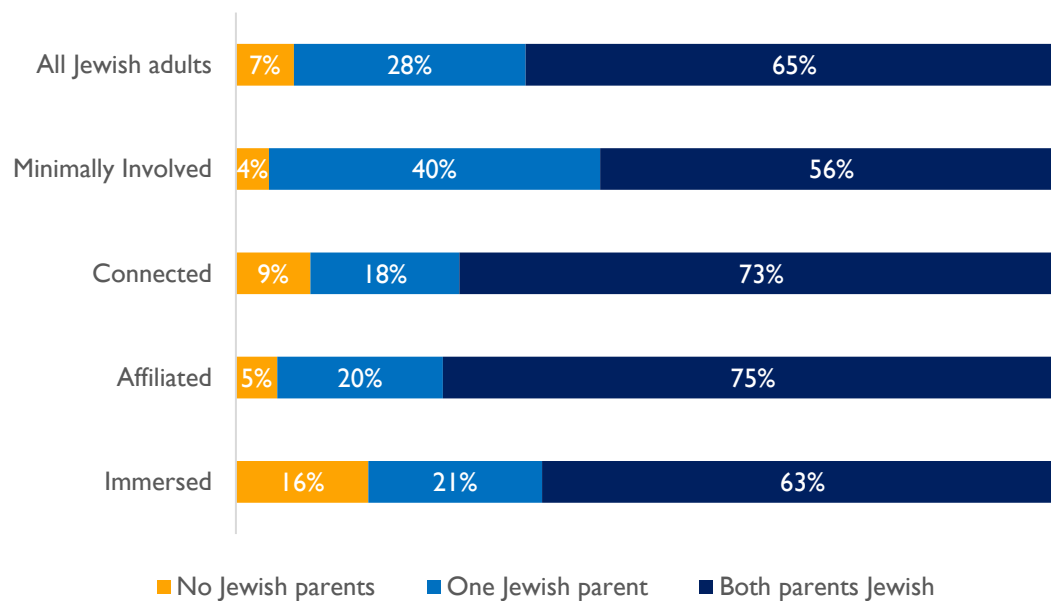
Jewish adults of nearly all denominations are represented in each of the engagement groups. Conservative Jewish adults comprise a larger share of the Immersed (34%) group than is their share of the population (16%). Reform Jewish adults are the largest *denomination* in all engagement groups. However, those *without* a denomination make up the largest shares of each engagement group except for the Immersed group (10%). Three quarters (76%) of the Minimally Involved group do not affiliate with a denomination (Figure 3.7).

Figure 3.7. Jewish engagement by denomination*



Although two thirds of Jewish adults in Maine were raised by two Jewish parents, about half of the Minimally Involved engagement group had two Jewish parents (Figure 3.8). Notably, the Immersed group has the largest share of those who became Jewish later in life (i.e., raised by no Jewish parents; 16%).

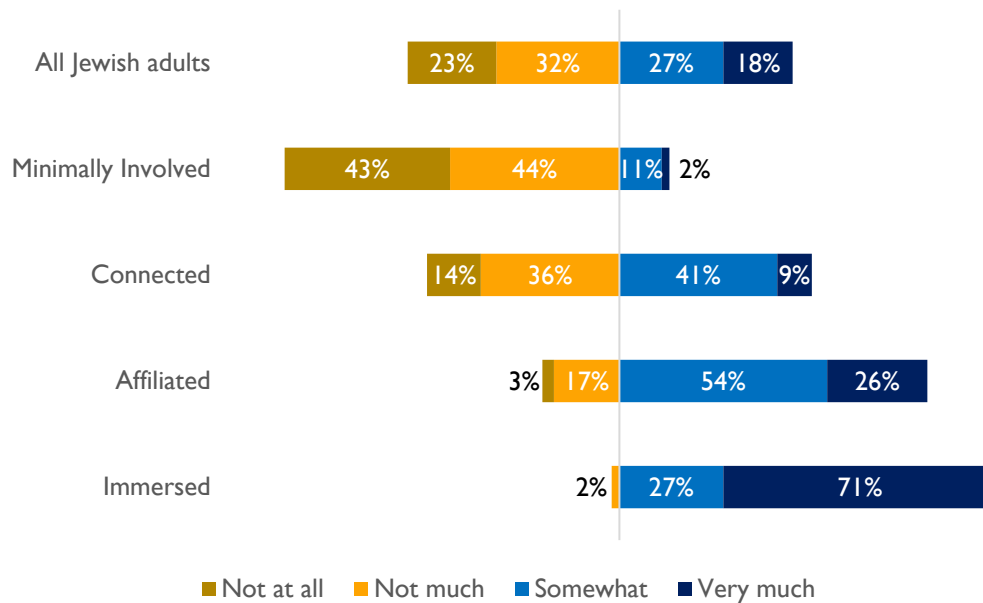
Figure 3.8. Jewish engagement by Jewish parentage*



Attitudes about being Jewish

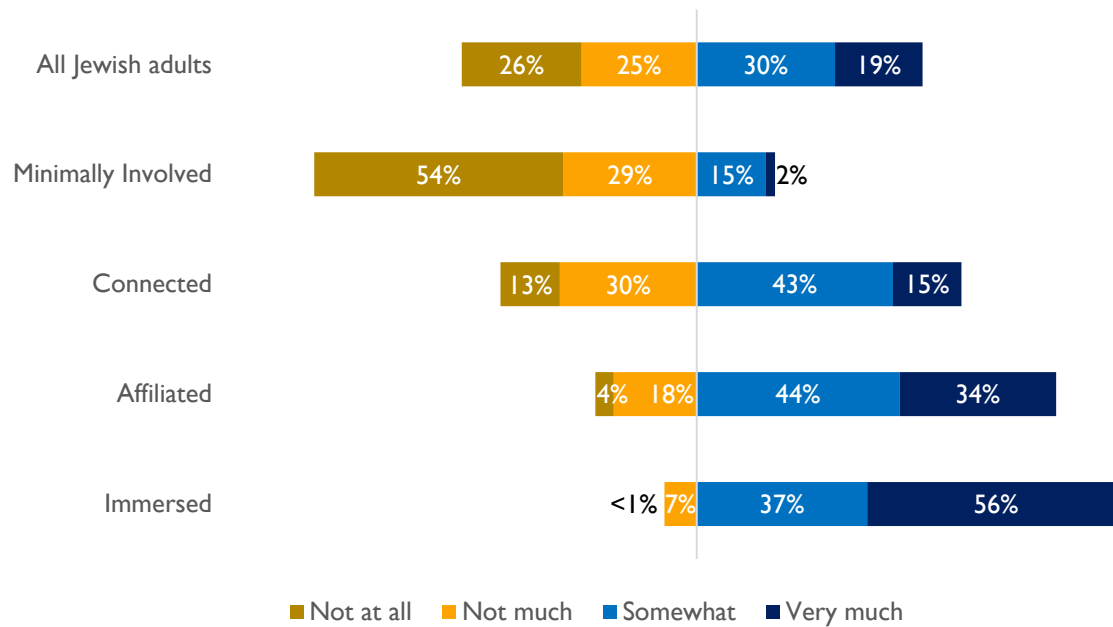
Comparing the attitudes about being Jewish across the engagement groups helps highlight differences and identify commonalities. About one quarter of Jewish adults in Maine (27%) feel that being Jewish is somewhat part of their daily lives, and another 18% feel it is very much part of their daily lives (Figure 3.9). The extent to which that is the case, however, varies greatly between the engagement groups. Although 71% of Jewish adults in the Immersed group feel that being Jewish is very much part of their daily lives, relatively few of the Connected group (9%) and the Minimally Involved group (2%) feel the same way.

Figure 3.9. Being Jewish is part of daily life*



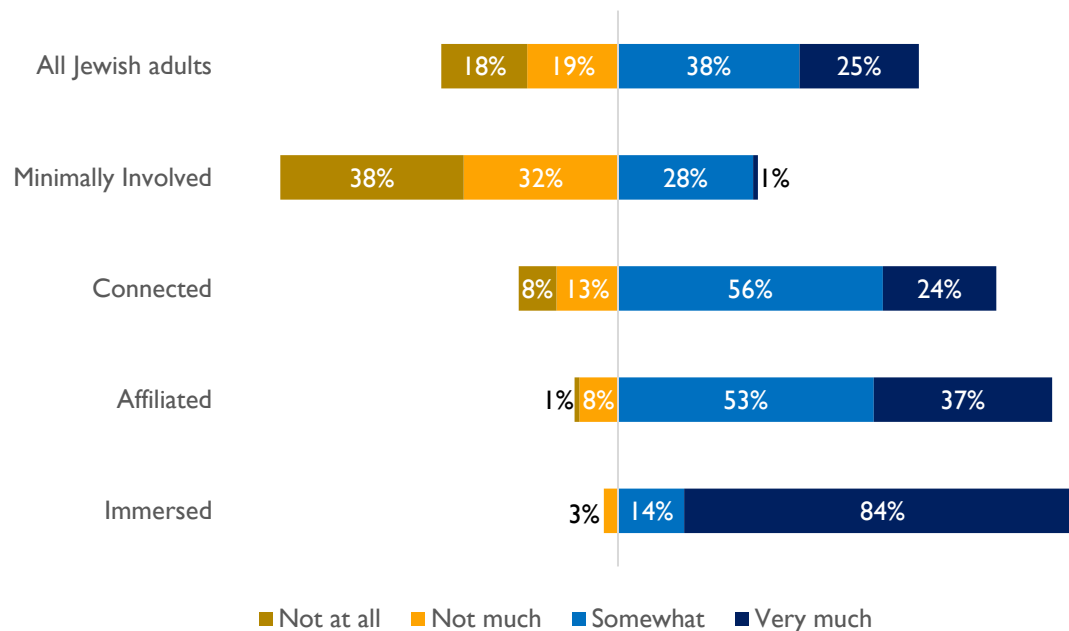
About one fifth of Jewish adults in Maine (19%) very much believe that being Jewish helps them cope at times of crisis (Figure 3.10), and another 30% believe that being Jewish helps somewhat. The majority of Jewish adults in the Minimally Involved group (54%) do not believe being Jewish helps them cope at all, compared to 26% of all Jewish adults in Maine.

Figure 3.10. Being Jewish helps cope at times of crisis*



Just as being Jewish can be a resource during a crisis, being Jewish can also be beneficial during times of joy. One quarter of Jewish adults in Maine believe that being Jewish very much helps them celebrate at times of joy (Figure 3.11). Only 1% of Jewish adults in the Minimally Involved group very much share this belief, compared to 84% of Jewish adults in the Immersed group.

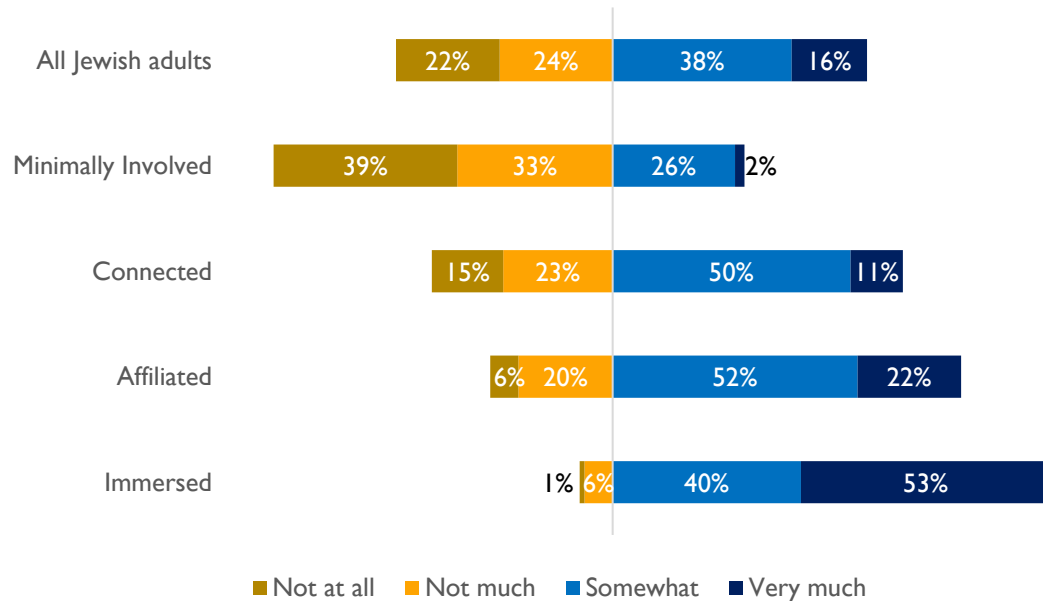
Figure 3.11. Being Jewish helps celebrate at times of joy*



Sixteen percent of Jewish adults in Maine very much believe that being Jewish guides them with major life decisions (Figure 3.12). Two percent of Jewish adults in the Minimally Involved group

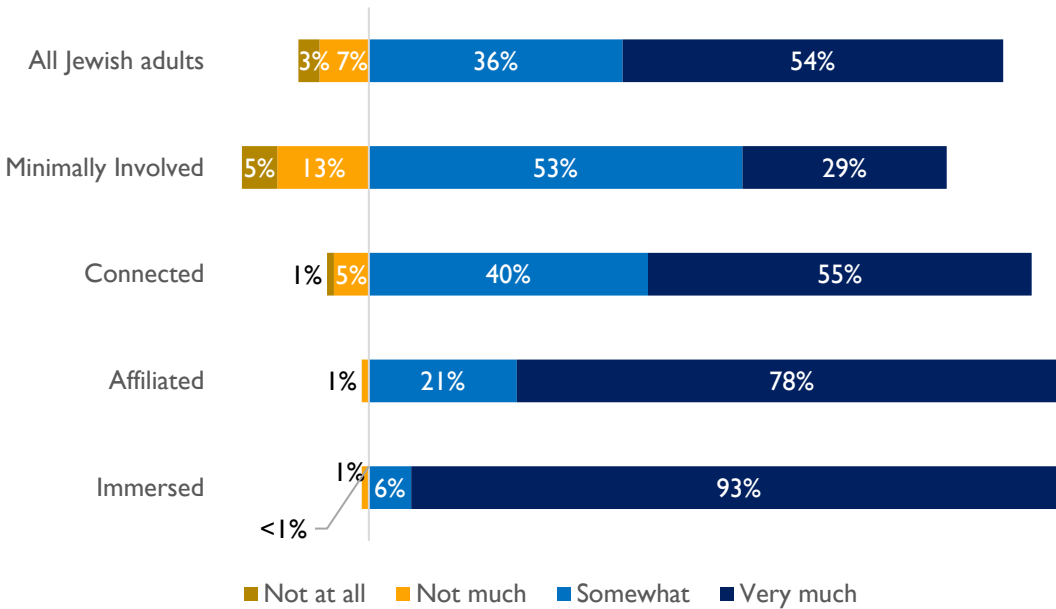
very much agree with this sentiment, while half of those in the Immersed group (53%) very much agree.

Figure 3.12. Being Jewish guides major life decisions*



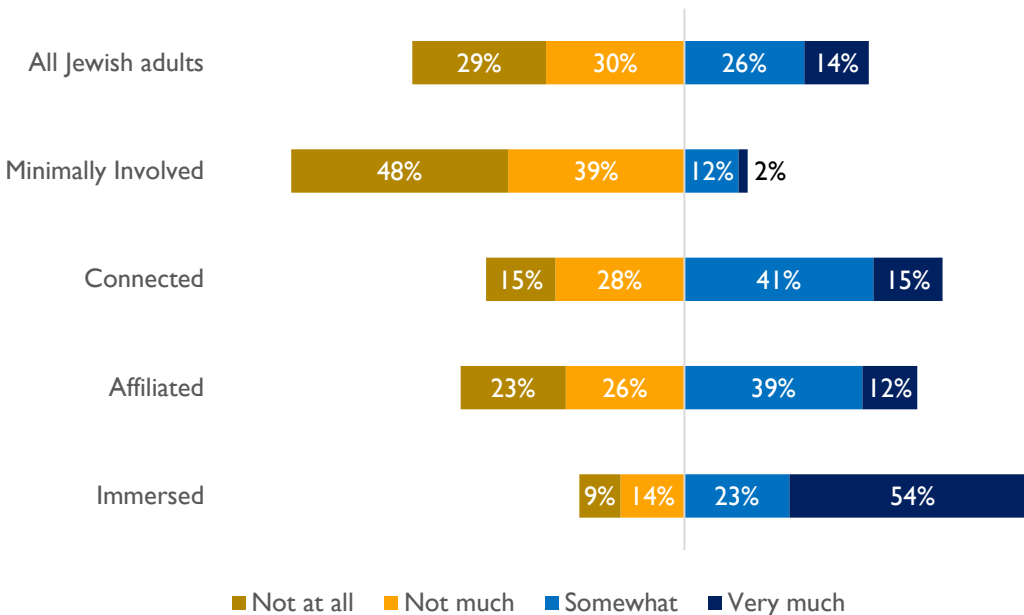
Half of Jewish adults in Maine (54%) very much feel a sense of belonging to the Jewish people (Figure 3.13). Large majorities of those in the Affiliated (78%) and Immersed (93%) groups very much feel this way, compared to less than one third of the Minimally Involved group (29%). However, another 53% of the Minimally Involved group somewhat feel a sense of belonging to the Jewish people.

Figure 3.13. Feel a sense of belonging to the Jewish people*



Fourteen percent of Jewish adults in Maine very much feel a sense of belonging to a Jewish community where they live (Figure 3.14). A majority of those in the Immersed group (54%) very much feel a sense of belonging, compared to 2% of the Minimally Involved group.

Figure 3.14. Feel a sense of belonging to a Jewish community where you live*



Most Jewish adults in Maine do not have strong feelings of belonging to a Jewish community where they do not live. Forty-five percent of Jewish adults in Maine feel *no* sense of belonging to a Jewish community where they do not live (Figure 3.15). A majority of those in the Minimally Involved

group (63%) feel no sense of belonging to a Jewish community where they do not live, while 14% of the Immersed group feel no sense of belonging to a Jewish community where they do not live.

Figure 3.15. Feel a sense of belonging to a Jewish community not where you live*

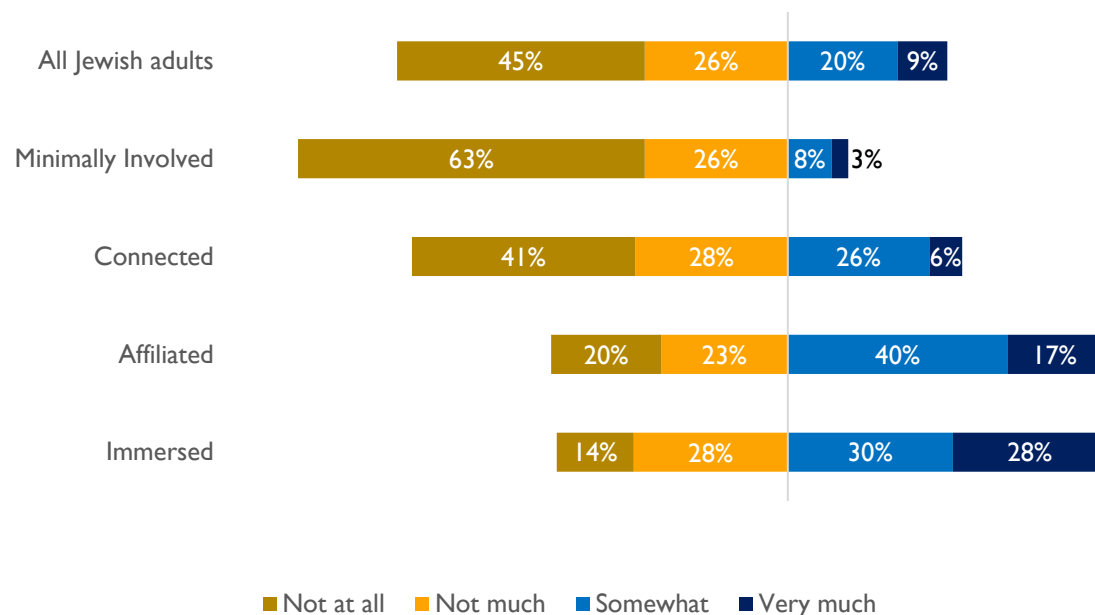


Table 3.2 illustrates the degree to which Jewish adults in Maine believe that various elements are essential to being Jewish. The majority of Jewish adults in Maine believe that remembering the Holocaust (76%), leading an ethical and moral life (71%), connecting to family and traditions (66%), and working for justice and equality in society (59%) are essential to being Jewish. Only 8% of Jewish adults believe that observing Jewish law is essential to being Jewish.

All engagement groups are similar in the degree to which their members believe remembering the Holocaust is essential to being Jewish. There is less consensus, however, on other aspects of being Jewish. Leading an ethical and moral life is essential to being Jewish to only 10% of the Connected group, compared to majorities of the other engagement groups. Taking care of Jews in need is essential to being Jewish to 40% of all Jewish adults and 81% of the Immersed group.

Spiritual practice and belief is essential to being Jewish to 73% of the Immersed group, but significantly smaller shares of the remaining engagement groups. Illustrating that religious observance is not synonymous with being part of the Immersed group, only 41% of the Immersed group believe that observing Jewish law is essential to being Jewish. However, less than 10% of each of the other engagement groups believe observing Jewish law is essential to being Jewish.

Table 3.2. Essential to being Jewish (% of Jewish adults)

	All Jewish adults (%)	Minimally Involved (%)	Connected (%)	Affiliated (%)	Immersed (%)
Remembering the Holocaust	76	75	72	85	74
Leading an ethical and moral life	71	61	10	83	93
Connecting to family and traditions	66	45	70	84	93
Working for justice and equality in society	59	52	52	69	81
Taking care of the Earth	46	39	40	54	62
Caring about Israel	41	35	32	64	51
Taking care of Jews in need	40	21	33	61	81
Engaging in Jewish art and culture such as music, food, literature	34	21	30	49	64
Prayer or other spiritual practice	23	12	14	18	73
Observing Jewish law (halakha)	8	2	2	6	41

CHAPTER 4. JEWISH CHILDREN AND EDUCATION

Chapter highlights

This chapter focuses on the number of children in Jewish households, some of the choices parents make about how to raise their children, and whether or not they take advantage of Jewish educational opportunities available in Maine. The chapter describes the landscape and degree of participation in Maine's Jewish educational offerings, including Jewish preschools, day schools, and Hebrew or religious schools, and Jewish summer camps, youth groups, and informal programs.

For many of the variables examined in this chapter, the sample is smaller than those examined in other chapters. Small or even moderately sized differences between subgroups may be the result of random variation in the survey responses rather than actual differences in the population. As a result, interpreting differences across subgroups should be approached with caution. Additionally, several analyses in this chapter include notes indicating the number of respondents available for analysis. In each of these cases, the number of respondents is indicated as a reminder that analyses of small samples have much wider confidence intervals.¹⁴

- Among the 4,600 children being raised in Jewish households in Maine, 3,700 are being raised Jewish in some way.
- Among the 900 children not being raised Jewish, 100 are being raised in no religion, 300 are being raised in another religion, and 500 have parents who either have not yet determined how they will raise their children or did not provide enough information to assess the children's Jewish identities.
- One percent of Jewish children in grades K-8 in Southern Maine were enrolled in a Jewish day school during the 2023-24 academic year.
- Sixteen percent of Jewish children in grades K-8 in Maine were enrolled in a part-time Jewish school during the 2023-24 academic year.
- Eight percent of Jewish children in grades K-8 in Maine were tutored in Jewish subjects during the 2023-24 academic year.
- Ten percent of Jewish children in grades K-12 in Maine participated in a Jewish youth group or teen program during the 2023-24 academic year. Six percent participated in a Jewish volunteer or teen leadership program.
- Thirteen percent of Jewish children in grades K-12 in Maine attended a Jewish summer camp as a camper or staff member in the summer of 2024. This includes 8% who attended a day camp and 6% who attended an overnight camp.
- Twenty percent of Jewish children ages 12 and older in Maine have ever participated in an immersive Jewish teen travel program, either in Israel (5%) or somewhere else (16%).

- Twenty-nine percent of Jewish households in Maine with at least one child age 12 or younger said they receive books from PJ Library or PJ Our Way. Another 15% of such households were not aware of these programs.

Children in Jewish households

Of the 4,600 children living in Jewish households in Maine, 3,700 are Jewish in some way (Table 4.1). These children are considered by their parents to be exclusively Jewish (2,700) or Jewish and another religion (1,000).

The remaining 900 children who are not considered Jewish by their parents either have no religion (100), are being raised in another religion (300) or their parents have not determined yet how they will be raised or did not provide enough information to assess their Jewish identities (500).

Table 4.1. Children in Jewish households

	Overall	Southern Maine	Rest of Maine
Jewish children	3,700	2,800	900
Jewish	2,700	2,100	600
Jewish and another religion	1,000	700	300
Not Jewish*	900	500	400
No religion	100	<50	100
Another religion	300	100	200
Undetermined	500	400	100
Total	4,600	3,400	1,300

*For the rest of this chapter, analyses do not include the children who are not Jewish or whose Jewish identity is undetermined.

Nineteen percent of Jewish children in Maine have inmarried parents, 78% have intermarried parents, and 3% have parents who are not married (Figure 4.1).

Of children of inmarried parents, 84% are exclusively Jewish, and 16% are Jewish and another religion (Figure 4.2).¹⁵ Of children of intermarried parents, 61% are Jewish alone, and 30% are Jewish and another religion (Figure 4.3).¹⁶ Five percent of children with intermarried parents have no religion, and 4% have some other religion. Nationally, 69% of the children of intermarried parents are being raised Jewish in some way.¹⁷

Figure 4.1. Parents of Jewish children (% of Jewish children)

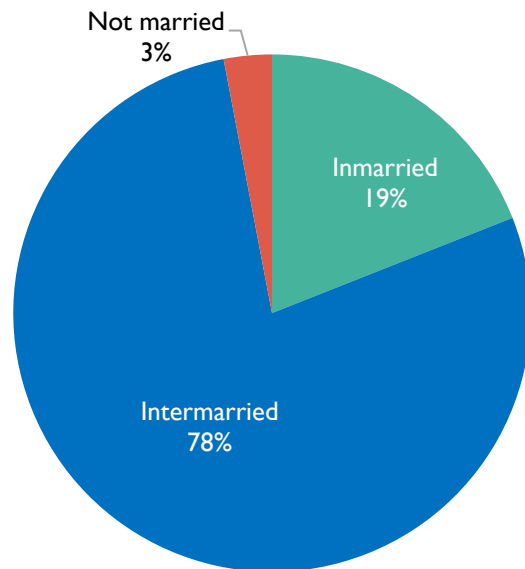


Figure 4.2. Jewish identity of children in inmarried households (% of children)

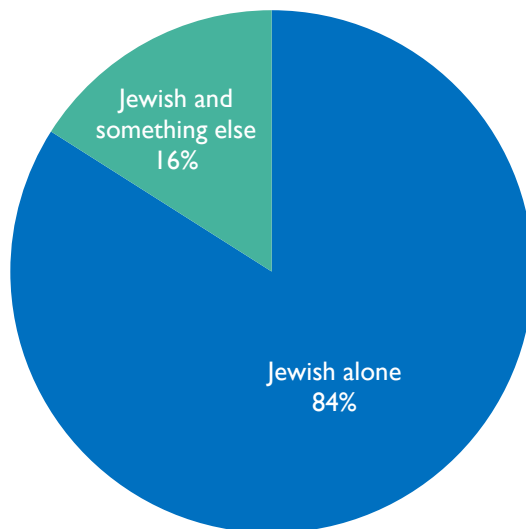
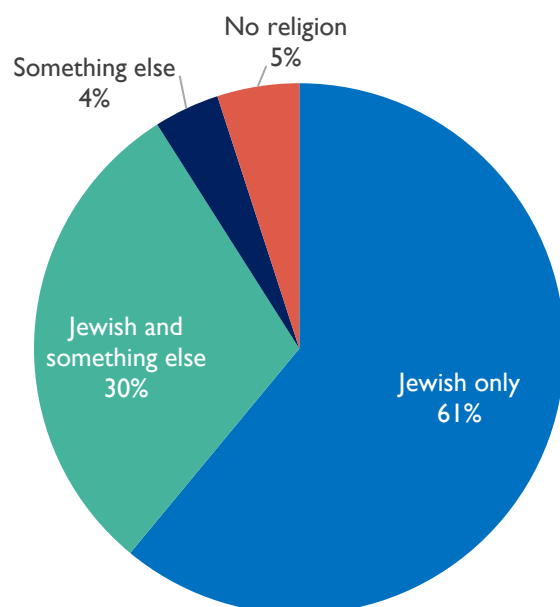


Figure 4.3. Jewish identity of children in intermarried households (% of children)



The largest share of Jewish children in Maine (41%) are between the ages of 6-12 (Table 4.2).

Table 4.2. Ages of Jewish children

All Jewish children (%)	
	↓
0-5	32
6-12	41
13-17	28
Total	100

Only 14% of Jewish children in Maine are in grades 9-12 (Table 4.3). The larger shares of Jewish children are either not yet in kindergarten (28%), in kindergarten-grade 5 (30%), or in grades 6-8 (28%). Less than 1% of Jewish children are past high school.¹⁸

Table 4.3. Grades of Jewish children

	All Jewish children (%)
	↓
Not yet in kindergarten	28
Kindergarten-grade 5	30
Grade 6-8	28
Grade 9-12	14
Past high school (e.g., college, gap year)	<1
Not in school	0
Total	100

Jewish schooling

Jewish education occurs in the context of formal classroom settings, such as day schools and part-time supplementary schools; tutoring or private classes; and informal settings, including camps, youth groups, and peer trips to Israel.

Over one third of age-eligible¹⁹ Jewish students (37%) in Maine were enrolled in some form of Jewish education during the 2023-2024 school year (Table 4.4). This includes Jewish students enrolled in a formal Jewish school (17%); nearly all of these students were enrolled in a part-time Jewish school (16%). Fourteen percent of Jewish students were enrolled in other Jewish programs such as a Jewish youth or teen program (10%), or a Jewish volunteer or leadership development program (6%). Eight percent of Jewish students were enrolled in Jewish tutoring or private classes. Thirteen percent of Jewish children in grades K-12 attended a Jewish camp in the summer of 2024, either as campers or as staff members. Of Jewish children ages 12 and older, 20% had ever enrolled in a travel program to Israel or an immersive Jewish program outside of Israel.

Table 4.4. K-12 Jewish education, 2023-24 and summer 2024 (by region)

	Age-eligible Jewish students (%)	Age-eligible Jewish students in Southern Maine (%)	Age-eligible Jewish students in rest of Maine (%)
Any Jewish education (K-12)	37	42	25
Formal Jewish school (K-8)	17	16	19
Part-time Jewish school (K-8)	16	15	19
Jewish day school (K-8)	N/A	1	N/A
Other Jewish programs (K-12)	14	13	16
Jewish youth group or teen program (K-12)	10	11	6
Jewish volunteer or leadership development program (K-12)	6	3	13
Tutoring or private classes (K-8)	8	9	4
Any Jewish camp (K-12)	13	19	1
Jewish day camp (K-12) ²⁰	8	11	<1
Jewish overnight camp (K-12)	6	8	<1
Any travel program (12+ years old)	20	25	11
Trip to Israel with teen program (12+ years old)	5	2	11
Jewish immersive program not based in Israel (12+ years old)	16	24	1

Note: Students could be enrolled in more than one type of school or program.

Parents of K-8 students in Southern Maine²¹ whose children were not enrolled in a Jewish day school were asked about reasons why their children did not attend a Jewish day school. Thirty-eight percent of these households indicated that enrolling their children in a Jewish day school was not important to them (Table 4.5). Twenty-two percent of households indicated that the Jewish education provided did not meet the family's needs or interests. Nineteen percent of households indicated they preferred a more diverse learning environment, and 14% cited the quality of general education. Others indicated cost as a reason for not enrolling their age-eligible children (12%) or cited insufficient support services (11%). Ten percent of households indicated there was no Jewish day school in a convenient location or with adequate transportation.

Table 4.5. Reasons for not enrolling children in Jewish day school (Southern Maine only)²²

	Households without age-eligible Jewish children in Jewish day school (%)
Not important to me	38
Jewish education offered does not meet my family's needs or interests	22
Prefer a more diverse learning environment	19
Quality of general education offered	14
Cost	12
Insufficient support services	11
Location	10
Other reason	27

Note: Respondents could select multiple reasons.

Parents of K-12 students throughout Maine whose children were not enrolled in Hebrew school²³ were asked why their age-eligible Jewish children were not enrolled in formal Jewish education (Table 4.6). About one third of these households (34%) indicated that formal Jewish education was not important to them. Other reasons included lack of a good religious fit (22%), no convenient

location (20%), and conflicts with schedules (16%). Some households cited lack of good social fit (15%), or age (14%) as reasons for not enrolling. Smaller proportions of households cited cost (9%) as a reason, or the quality of education offered (2%). Twenty-seven percent of households cited other reasons, such as disagreements between the parents about whether or where to enroll the children.

Table 4.6. Reasons for not enrolling children in formal Jewish education²⁴

Households without age-eligible Jewish children in formal Jewish education (%)	
Not important to me	34
No good religious fit	22
Location	20
Schedule	16
No good social fit	15
Age	14
Cost	9
Quality of education offered	2
Other	27

Note: Respondents could select multiple reasons.

Parents whose children were not attending or planning to attend a Jewish summer camp in the summer of 2024 were also asked their reasons for not sending their children to such camps (Table 4.7). The most commonly cited reasons by these households were lack of interest in Jewish camp (42%) and a preference for other summer activities (38%). Eighteen percent of households indicated that they preferred other camps, and 16% cited the location or distance as a reason. An additional 10% of households cited cost as a reason, and 3% indicated that there were no appropriate options for Jewish camp. Less than 1% of households cited the quality of Jewish camps as a reason for not enrolling their children.

Table 4.7. Reasons for not sending children to Jewish camp²⁵

Households without age-eligible Jewish children at Jewish camp (%)	
Not interested in Jewish camp	42
Prefer other summer activities	38
Prefer other camps	18
Location or distance of Jewish camps	16
Cost	10
No appropriate Jewish camp options	3
Quality of Jewish camps	<1
Other	19

Note: Respondents could select multiple reasons.

Children's programs

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, 29% received books, and 15% were not aware of the program.

Twenty-one percent of Jewish families with a child under the age of 12 participated in a Tot Shabbat program in the past year.

Lifecycle celebrations

Forty percent of age-eligible Jewish children have had a bar, bat, or b' mitzvah ceremony, and an additional 7% will have one in the future.

CHAPTER 5. CONGREGATIONS AND RITUAL LIFE

Chapter highlights

Congregational life is a longstanding feature of the US Jewish community, and membership in a congregation is one important way Jews enact their Jewish identity. However, regardless of whether they are members of a congregation, many Jews participate in religious rituals on a regular or intermittent basis on their own.

- Twenty-four percent of Jewish households in Maine belong to a synagogue or other Jewish congregation, lower than the national average of 35%.
- Fifty-three percent of Jewish adults in Maine attended Jewish religious services at least once in the past year, either in person or online, including 35% of Jewish adults who are not members of any Jewish congregation. Eighteen percent attended at least once a month.
- During the 2023 High Holidays, 40% of Jewish adults in Maine attended services.
- Fifty-four percent of Jewish adults in Maine marked Shabbat in some way during the past year, including 15% who did so every week or nearly every week.
- The most common ways the Jews of Maine mark Shabbat is by lighting candles on Friday night (42%), spending time with family or friends (36%), and having a special Shabbat meal (36%).
- Seventy-six percent of Jewish adults in Maine lit Hanukkah candles in 2023, and 57% attended or held a Passover seder in 2024. Thirty-four percent of Jewish adults fasted on Yom Kippur in 2023, and 25% observe at least some of the laws of kashrut.

Congregation membership

In Maine, 24% of Jewish households belong to a Jewish congregation of some type, whether a synagogue, independent *minyan* or *chavurah*, Chabad, or other Jewish worship community (Table 5.1). Nationally, 35% of Jewish households include a member of a Jewish congregation.²⁶

Nearly no households in the Minimally Involved engagement group belong to congregations (<1%), compared to about one third of the Affiliated group (32%), 40% of the Connected group, and 68% of the Immersed group.

Congregation membership is highest among inmarried Jewish households (38%), followed by a third of unmarried households (33%). Only 17% of intermarried households belong to a congregation.

Table 5.1. Membership in Jewish congregations

		Belongs to any congregation (%)
All Jewish households		24
Jewish engagement		
Minimally Involved		<1
Connected		40
Affiliated		32
Immersed		68
Region		
Southern Maine		24
Rest of Maine		25
Age		
18-39		16
40-54		29
55-64		19
65-74		18
75+		38
Relationship status		
Inmarried		38
Intermarried		17
Not married		33
Minor child in household		
No		23
Yes		28

Congregation types

Synagogue: Typically has its own building, a dues-for-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; however, in Maine, there are many non-denominational synagogues that appeal more broadly.

Independent *minyan* or *chavurah*: May lack its own building, dues-for-membership structure, professional clergy, and/or amenities commonly available in synagogues.

Chabad: May have its own building, professional clergy, and programs or amenities commonly available in synagogues. Usually does not have a dues-for-membership structure, but sometimes does. Draws from across the denominational spectrum.

Twenty percent of Jewish households belong to a local synagogue in Maine. Additionally, 2% of Jewish households belong to a local Chabad, and 1% belong to a congregation outside of Maine or to a local independent *minyan* or *chavurah*, respectively. Of congregation-member households, 91% belong to a local congregation, including 70% who pay dues to a synagogue and 12% who are members of a synagogue that does not require dues (Table 5.2). A greater share of Jewish adults from the Immersed group belong to a local congregation and pay membership dues than any other group (Table 5.3). Twenty-eight percent of inmarried Jews pay membership dues to a congregation (28%), compared to 20% of non-married Jews and 12% of intermarried Jews.

Table 5.2. Type of local congregation membership

	All households (%)	Congregation-member households (%)
Local congregation	20	91
Dues-paying synagogue	16	70
No dues synagogue	3	12
Chabad	2	10
Congregation outside of Maine	1	4
Independent <i>minyan</i> or <i>chavurah</i>	1	3
Unknown ²⁷	1	6

Note: A household may belong to multiple congregations.

Table 5.3. Membership in Jewish congregations

	Pays dues (%)	Does not pay dues (%)	Local congregation (%)
Congregation-member households	16	3	20
Jewish engagement			
Minimally Involved	<1	0	<1
Connected	26	7	35
Affiliated	21	5	31
Immersed	47	8	56
Region			
Southern Maine	15	4	20
Rest of Maine	18	3	23
Age			
18-39	7	5	15
40-54	20	1	22
55-64	12	5	19
65-74	13	2	16
75+	28	3	34
Relationship status			
Inmarried	28	3	32
Intermarried	12	3	15
Not married	20	8	31
Minor child in household			
No	15	4	20
Yes	21	3	24

Jewish households that do not belong to a congregation reported many reasons for not affiliating (Table 5.4). Thirty-six percent of these households do not deem it a priority to belong to a congregation. Almost a quarter of these households (23%) do not feel any of congregations are a good fit. Fifteen percent of these households said there is no congregation option near where they live, and 11% cited cost as an obstacle to joining a congregation. Notably, not having a nearby option was cited as an obstacle to a larger share of households in the Rest of Maine region (22%) than in Southern Maine (10%).

Table 5.4. Reasons households do not belong to Jewish congregation

	All non-congregation-member households (%)	Non-congregation-member households in Southern Maine (%)	Non-congregation-member households in rest of Maine
Not a priority	36	39	31
No good fit for me	23	22	28
No nearby option	15	10	22
Cost	11	11	11
I have no children at home	3	5	2
None of the above	30	34	24

Note: Households could choose more than one option.

Religious services

Participation in congregational life is not limited only to membership. More than half of Jewish adults (53%) attended a Jewish religious service at least once in the past year, either in person or online (Tables 5.5).²⁸ This share includes 35% of Jewish adults who are not currently congregational members. Eighteen percent of Jewish adults attended services at least once a month, and 40% attended High Holiday services in 2023. Jewish adults living in the Rest of Maine region attended services on a monthly basis more often than those residing in Southern Maine. Almost half of congregation members attended services monthly or more in the past year.

Almost half of Jewish adults in Southern Maine attended services in person during the past year (49%), compared to the 41% of Jewish adults in the Rest of Maine region (Table 5.6). Eight percent of Jewish adults in Maine attended service in the past year both in person and online (not shown in table).

Table 5.5. Attendance at Jewish services during past year

	Ever (%)	Monthly (%)	High Holidays 2023 (%)
All Jewish adults	53	18	40
Jewish engagement			
Minimally Involved	9	0	0
Connected	88	20	60
Affiliated	74	6	62
Immersed	100	81	99
Region			
Southern Maine	55	13	40
Rest of Maine	52	24	41
Age			
18-39	64	24	48
40-54	55	19	45
55-64	42	11	33
65-74	44	15	34
75+	58	18	36
Relationship status			
Inmarried	63	24	52
Intermarried	43	13	31
Not married	67	21	43
Minor child in household			
No	53	17	39
Yes	60	19	47
Congregation member			
No	35	4	21
Yes	94	48	82

Table 5.6. Jewish services attendance, in person or online

	All Jewish adults (%)	Southern Maine (%)	Rest of Maine (%)
In person	46	49	41
Online, Maine congregation	9	8	10
Online, congregation outside of Maine	10	10	12

Note: Respondents could choose more than one option.

Shabbat, holidays, and rituals

More than half of Jewish adults in Maine marked Shabbat in some way during the previous year, including 26% who marked Shabbat occasionally, 13% who marked Shabbat at least once a month but less than weekly, and 15% who marked Shabbat every week or almost every week (Table 5.7).²⁹ Adults ages 18-34 marked Shabbat at any frequency more than any other age group.

Thirty-seven percent of Jewish adults who belong to Jewish congregations marked Shabbat every week or almost every week, compared to 7% of adults who do not belong to a Jewish congregation.

Table 5.7. Frequency of marking Shabbat during past year

	Never (%)	Occasionally (%)	At least once a month but not every week (%)	Every week or almost every week (%)
All Jewish adults	46	26	13	15
Jewish engagement				
Minimally Involved	87	13	0	0
Connected	29	39	20	12
Affiliated	19	43	21	17
Immersed	0	9	27	64
Region				
Southern Maine	45	28	12	14
Rest of Maine	52	18	13	17
Age				
18-39	32	24	24	21
40-54	46	24	16	14
55-64	57	24	5	13
65-74	59	27	4	11
75+	59	21	6	14
Relationship status				
Inmarried	38	26	15	21
Intermarried	58	21	10	11
Not married	37	32	17	15
Minor child in household				
No	48	27	10	15
Yes	43	19	20	17
Congregation member				
No	63	23	7	7
Yes	14	28	25	32

The most common ways the Jews of Maine mark Shabbat is by lighting candles on Friday night (42%), spending time with family or friends (36%), and having a special Shabbat meal (36%; Tables 5.8a and 5.8b). Inmarried Jewish adults are more likely to light Shabbat candles (51%) than their intermarried (33%) or single counterparts (47%). However, 26% of single Jewish adults take a break from technology, significantly more than their intermarried and inmarried peers.

Table 5.8a. Shabbat activities, past year

	Light Shabbat candles (%)	Have a special meal or special foods (%)	Spend time with family or friends (%)	Take a break from work (%)	Take a break from technology (%)
All Jewish adults	42	36	36	21	14
Jewish engagement					
Minimally Involved	9	7	8	2	<1
Connected	52	46	47	21	14
Affiliated	63	57	51	33	23
Immersed	92	76	80	60	44
Region					
Southern Maine	42	37	37	20	16
Rest of Maine	40	33	34	22	11
Age					
18-39	58	60	60	34	24
40-54	44	42	41	21	16
55-64	33	25	27	16	11
65-74	34	20	22	10	6
75+	24	14	14	14	5
Relationship status					
Inmarried	51	40	40	22	14
Intermarried	33	30	32	19	10
Not married	47	44	40	21	26
Minor child in household					
No	41	33	34	20	14
Yes	45	45	44	26	15
Congregation member					
No	27	22	24	15	9
Yes	72	64	61	33	24

Table 5.8b. Shabbat activities, past year

	Attend religious services or Shabbat programs (%)	Spend time outdoors (%)	Jewish learning or reading (%)	Other (%)
All Jewish adults	24	18	12	2
Jewish engagement				
Minimally Involved	<1	1	1	1
Connected	27	28	6	1
Affiliated	24	25	15	1
Immersed	82	40	56	9
Region				
Southern Maine	22	16	11	1
Rest of Maine	25	20	14	3
Age				
18-39	36	33	21	4
40-54	25	19	9	<1
55-64	17	10	9	2
65-74	16	9	9	2
75+	14	10	8	2
Relationship status				
Inmarried	29	18	11	2
Intermarried	16	15	12	3
Not married	34	27	18	1
Minor child in household				
No	22	18	12	3
Yes	29	16	16	<1
Congregation member				
No	8	10	6	2
Yes	56	34	26	1

A majority of Jewish adults in Maine celebrate Jewish holidays and observe at least some Jewish rituals (Table 5.9). Three quarters of Jewish adults (76%) lit Hanukkah candles in 2023. Fifty-seven percent of Jewish adults attended or held a Passover seder in spring 2024.³⁰ One third of Jewish adults (34%) fasted on Yom Kippur in 2023, and one quarter of Jewish adults (25%) keeps any of the laws of kashrut. Larger shares of Jewish young adults ages 18-39 attended or held a seder in 2024 compared to older adults. Similarly, young Jewish adults are more likely to follow any kosher rules compared to older Jewish adults.

Table 5.9. Holidays and rituals

	Fasted on Yom Kippur, 2023* (%)	Hanukkah candles, 2023 (%)	Seder, 2024 (%)	Follow any kosher rules (%)
All Jewish adults	34	76	57	25
Jewish engagement				
Minimally Involved	3	49	20	11
Connected	44	97	81	22
Affiliated	52	90	82	23
Immersed	87	99	99	75
Region				
Southern Maine	37	83	62	23
Rest of Maine	29	66	51	28
Age				
18-39	38	86	78	42
40-54	37	77	58	24
55-64	30	63	46	16
65-74	31	74	47	16
75+	29	73	46	21
Relationship status				
Inmarried	44	82	66	36
Intermarried	26	71	51	16
Not married	39	79	60	30
Minor child in household				
No	35	78	56	22
Yes	36	78	67	27
Congregation member				
No	22	66	43	17
Yes	60	97	91	42

*An additional 7% of Jewish adults did not fast for medical reasons.

CHAPTER 6. COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Chapter highlights

The Maine Jewish community offers numerous opportunities for adults and families to express their sense of connection to the Jewish community and engage in Jewish communal life. Jewish adults participate in cultural, educational, religious, and social events in person and online. They volunteer their time and donate their money. At times, however, they perceive barriers that prevent their desired participation in the Jewish community.

This chapter describes the many ways in which Jews in Maine interact and participate with their fellow members of the Jewish community and with Jewish organizations.

- Sixty-three percent of Jewish adults in Maine have at least some close Jewish friends.
- Ninety-seven percent of Jewish adults in Maine feel at least some sense of belonging to the Jewish people.
- Seventy-one percent of Jewish adults in Maine feel at least some sense of belonging to a Jewish community where they live.
- Fifty-five percent of Jewish adults in Maine feel at least some sense of belonging to a Jewish community not where they live, such as a Jewish summer camp, a place where they used to live, a Jewish organization, or an online Jewish group.
- Twenty-seven percent of Jewish households said they belong to at least one Jewish organization, aside from congregations.
- In the past year, 57% of Jewish adults in Maine participated in a program sponsored by a Jewish organization in the state.
- The most common barriers to Jewish adults' participation in the Maine Jewish community are not having found Jewish programs of interest (32%), location not being convenient (30%), and not feeling confident in one's Jewish knowledge (17%).
- Fifty-three percent of Jewish adults in Maine volunteered somewhere in the past year. Four percent volunteered exclusively with Jewish organizations, 19% volunteered with both Jewish and non-Jewish organizations, and 31% volunteered exclusively with non-Jewish organizations.
- Eighty-five percent of Jewish households in Maine made charitable donations in the past year. Two percent donated exclusively to Jewish organizations, 46% donated to both Jewish and non-Jewish organizations, and 37% donated exclusively to non-Jewish organizations.

Jewish friends

Sixty-three percent of Jewish adults in Maine have at least some close Jewish friends (Table 6.1).³¹ Half of Jewish adults indicated that some of their closest friends are Jewish, while 13% indicated that most or all of their closest friends are Jewish. Members of the Affiliated (71%) and Immersed (76%) were the most likely to indicate that at least some of their closest friends are Jewish, with 37% of Immersed adults indicating that most or all of their close friends are Jewish. Members of the

Minimally Involved (45%) and Connected (35%) groups were the most likely to indicate that few or none of their closest friends are Jewish.

Table 6.1. Close Jewish friends

	None / Hardly any of them (%)	Some of them (%)	Most / All of them (%)	Total (%)
All Jewish adults	37	50	13	100
Jewish engagement				
Minimally Involved	45	53	3	100
Connected	35	51	13	100
Affiliated	29	52	19	100
Immersed	24	39	37	100
Region				
Southern Maine	36	50	14	100
Rest of Maine	38	51	11	100
Age				
18-39	51	40	9	100
40-54	37	50	13	100
55-64	35	51	14	100
65-74	30	55	16	100
75+	25	59	16	100
Relationship status				
Inmarried	34	42	24	100
Intermarried	38	57	6	100
Not married	42	46	12	100
Minor child in household				
No	37	49	14	100
Yes	28	62	10	100

Feelings of connection to the Jewish community

Almost all Jewish adults in Maine (97%) feel a sense of belonging to the Jewish people, including a majority (54%) who very much feel a sense of belonging (Table 6.2).³² In contrast, 71% of Jewish adults in Maine feel a sense of belonging to a Jewish community where they live, including only 14% who very much feel a sense of belonging. Fifty-five percent of Jewish adults feel a sense of belonging to another Jewish community that is not where they live, such as a Jewish summer camp, a place where they used to live, a Jewish organization, or an online Jewish group.

The vast majority of Jewish adults from the Immersed (91%) and Connected (85%) groups feel a sense of belonging to a Jewish community where they live; 54% of those in the Immersed group very much feel like they belong to a Jewish community where they live. Seventy-nine percent of Jewish adults ages 18-39 feel a sense of belonging to a Jewish community that is not where they live, but only 10% feel this sense of connection “very much.”

Table 6.2. Feeling a sense of belonging to...

The Jewish people			A Jewish community where you live		Another Jewish community, not where you live	
	Any (%)	Very much (%)	Any (%)	Very much (%)	Any (%)	Very much (%)
All Jewish adults	97	54	71	14	55	9
Jewish engagement						
Minimally Involved	95	29	52	2	37	3
Connected	99	55	85	15	59	6
Affiliated	100	78	77	12	80	17
Immersed	100	93	91	54	86	28
Region						
Southern Maine	97	53	73	12	58	11
Rest of Maine	99	54	66	18	54	7
Age						
18-39	98	44	76	16	79	10
40-54	99	44	70	16	54	6
55-64	94	58	69	11	42	7
65-74	98	63	65	11	54	11
75+	99	66	72	17	42	13
Relationship status						
Inmarried	96	61	78	17	58	12
Intermarried	99	49	68	14	55	6
Not married	99	50	61	11	63	15
Minor child in household						
No	97	57	68	15	55	11
Yes	98	47	75	15	60	5

Jewish organizations and programs

Members of the Maine Jewish community participate in a wide range of organizations and activities. Twenty-seven percent of Jewish households said they belong to at least one local Jewish organization, aside from congregations or the JCA (Table 6.3). A majority of members of the Affiliated (56%) and Immersed (52%) groups belong to at least one Jewish organization other than a synagogue. Thirty-one percent of Jewish households in Southern Maine said they belong to a local Jewish organization other than a congregation or the JCA, compared to only 20% of households in the rest of the state.

Twelve percent of Jewish households belong to a local Jewish organization or club other than a synagogue or the JCA, and 14% belong to an informal or grassroots Jewish group. Thirty-six percent of households in the Affiliated group belong to a local Jewish organization or club, along with 28% of households in the Immersed group. Younger members of the community are more likely to

belong to an informal or grassroots Jewish group than older households, with 21% of those ages 18-39 belonging to an informal or grassroots Jewish group.

Fifteen percent of Jewish households in Southern Maine belong to the JCA.³³ Households in the Immersed group (27%) are the most likely to belong to the JCA.

Table 6.3. Membership in Jewish organizations

	Member of any Jewish organization (%)	Local Jewish organizations or clubs (%)	Informal or grassroots Jewish group (%)	Member of Jewish Community Alliance* (%)
All Jewish households	27	12	14	15
Jewish engagement				
Minimally Involved	6	<1	1	8
Connected	31	8	16	19
Affiliated	56	36	26	18
Immersed	52	28	32	27
Region				
Southern Maine	31	12	15	15
Rest of Maine	20	11	11	N/A
Age				
18-39	27	9	21	12
40-54	33	13	11	21
55-64	20	8	11	10
65-74	22	13	8	13
75+	31	18	16	14
Relationship status				
Inmarried	34	19	12	24
Intermarried	22	8	12	13
Not married	33	17	20	11
Minor child in household				
No	26	13	14	12
Yes	30	8	13	21

* Asked only of respondents in Southern Maine.

In the past year, 57% of Jewish adults in Maine participated in a program sponsored by a Jewish organization in the state, including 7% who participated in such programs often (Table 6.4). Members of the Immersed and Affiliated groups participated in programs most frequently, with 84% of the Immersed group having done so often (39%) or sometimes (45%) and 51% of the Affiliated group participating often (5%) or sometimes (46%). Proportionally, more Jewish adults living in Southern Maine (63%) participated in any programs than Jewish adults living in the rest of the state (47%).

Table 6.4. Participated any Jewish program, past year

	Never (%)	Rarely (%)	Sometimes (%)	Often (%)	Total (%)
All Jewish adults	43	25	25	7	100
Jewish engagement					
Minimally Involved	79	15	5	1	100
Connected	30	38	31	1	100
Affiliated	14	35	46	5	100
Immersed	1	15	45	39	100
Region					
Southern Maine	37	32	25	7	100
Rest of Maine	53	14	25	8	100
Age					
18-39	33	23	38	6	100
40-54	47	23	22	8	100
55-64	53	21	18	8	100
65-74	48	26	18	7	100
75+	39	31	24	6	100
Relationship status					
Inmarried	37	25	27	11	100
Intermarried	50	22	24	3	100
Not married	34	34	22	11	100
Minor child in household					
No	41	27	25	7	100
Yes	40	22	29	8	100

When asked about their preferences for attending Jewish programs and activities aside from religious services, 38% of Jewish adults in Maine prefer to attend exclusively in person. Eighteen percent prefer attending both in-person and online programs, 3% prefer attending exclusively online, and 9% have no preferences. The remainder said they do not attend Jewish programs or activities.

Forty-two percent of Jewish adults residing in Southern Maine prefer to attend programs exclusively in person, compared with 29% of Jewish adults residing in the rest of the state. Eighteen percent of Jewish adults residing in Southern Maine and 19% in the rest of the state prefer attending both in-person and online programs. Three percent of Jewish adults residing in Southern Maine and 4% in the rest of the state prefer attending exclusively online programs. Ten percent of Jewish adults residing in both Southern Maine and the rest of the state have no preferences for attending Jewish programs and activities in person or online. Twenty-seven percent of Jewish adults residing in Southern Maine and 38% in the rest of the state said they do not attend Jewish programs or activities.

Of Jewish adults in Maine who did not participate in organized Jewish programs, 32% are at least somewhat interested in participating in these programs, including 9% who are very much interested and 23% who are somewhat interested. Thirty-seven percent of Jewish adults in Maine who did not

participate in organized Jewish programs do not have much interest, and 31% are not at all interested.

Jewish adults who expressed no interest in Jewish programs were asked why they have no interest. The most commonly cited reasons include not considering Judaism an important part of their lives, lack of connection to the Jewish community, and having different priorities.

Program type and sponsor

Of Jewish adults in Maine who participated in Jewish programs in the past year, 29% participated in programs that are primarily spiritual or religious, 27% participated in programs that are primarily cultural, and 21% participated in programs that are primarily educational (Table 6.5). Residents of Southern Maine, where Jewish cultural amenities are more prevalent, participated in cultural programs and social programs in significantly larger shares than their counterparts in the rest of the state (32% versus 22% and 13% versus 4%, respectively).

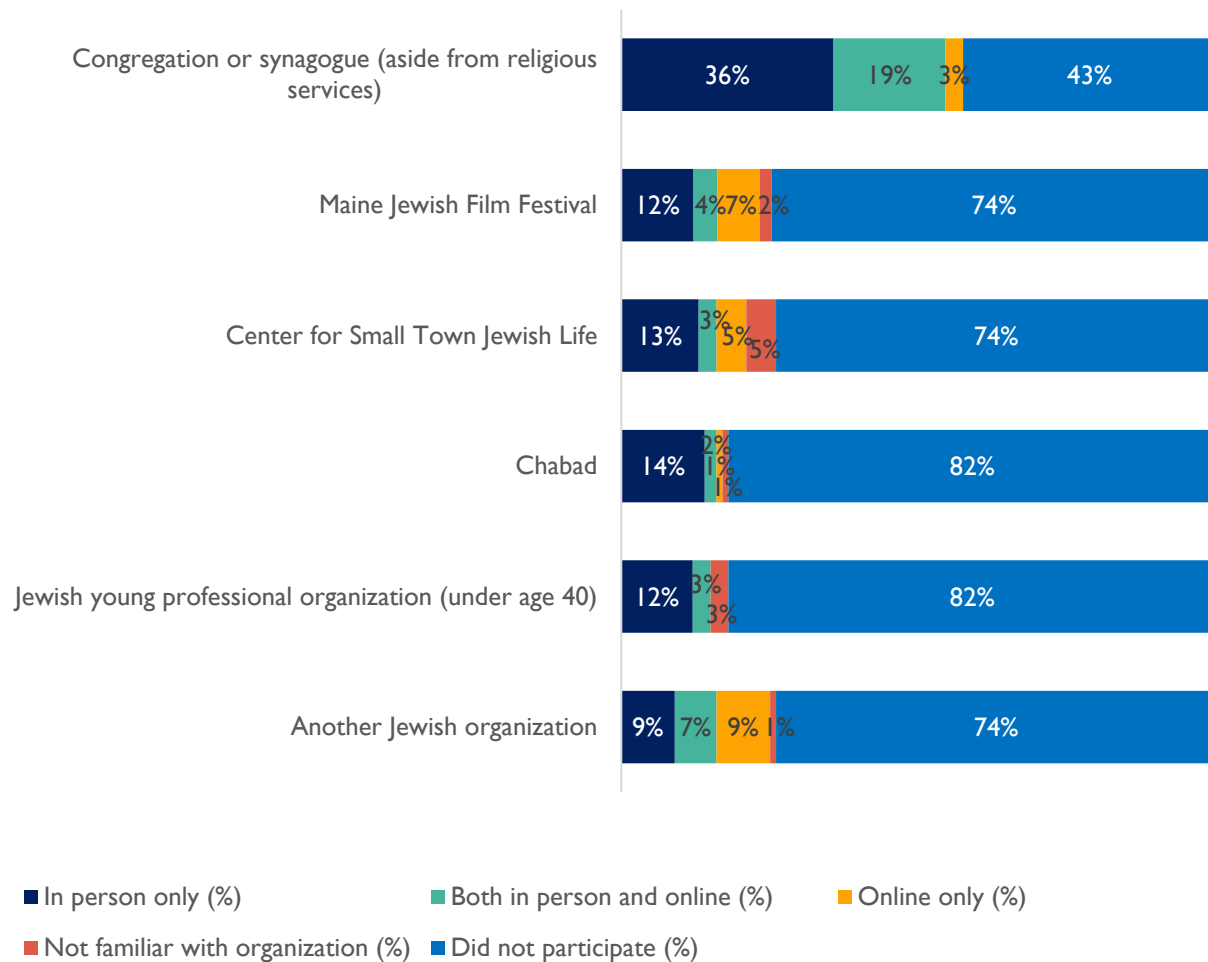
Table 6.5. Jewish program type

	Jewish adults who participated in programs (%)	Southern Maine (%)	Rest of Maine (%)
Primarily spiritual or religious (aside from a religious service)	29	30	26
Primarily cultural (concert, theater, film, museum)	27	32	22
Primarily educational (class or lecture)	21	18	25
Primarily charitable (volunteering, fundraising)	10	12	8
Primarily outdoors or active	8	8	8
Primarily social (bar night, party, dance)	9	13	4
Primarily political (rally or protest)	7	9	5
Something else	2	3	1
None of these	8	9	5

Note: Respondents could choose more than one option.

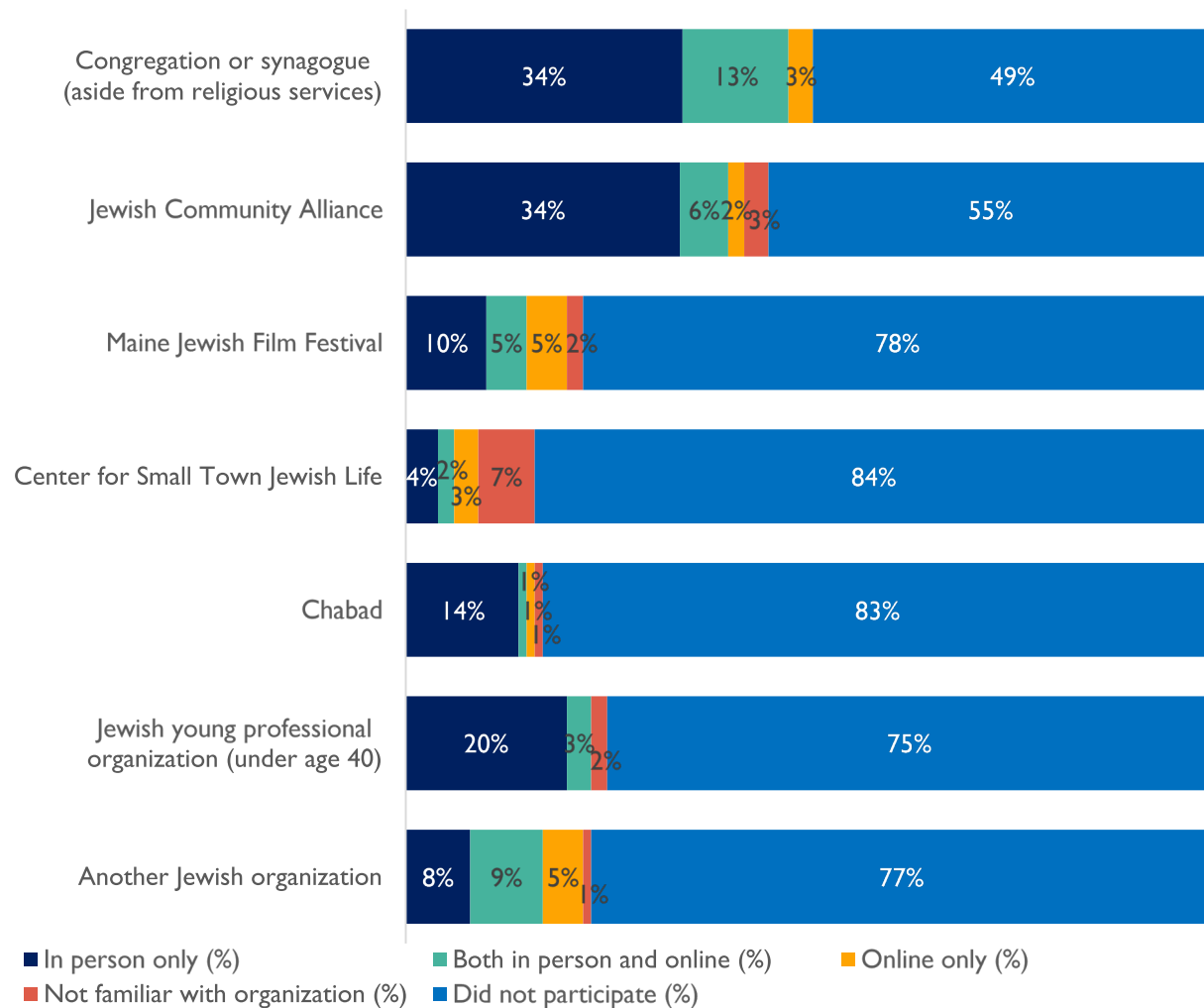
Jewish adults in Maine participated in programs sponsored by many local Jewish organizations, some in person, some online only, and some both in person and online (Figure 6.1). Among Jewish adults who participated in a program, 57% participated in a program sponsored by a congregation or synagogue, with 36% participating in person only, 3% participating online only, and 19% participating both in person and online.

Figure 6.1. Program sponsor, all Jewish adults who participated in programs (whole state)³⁴



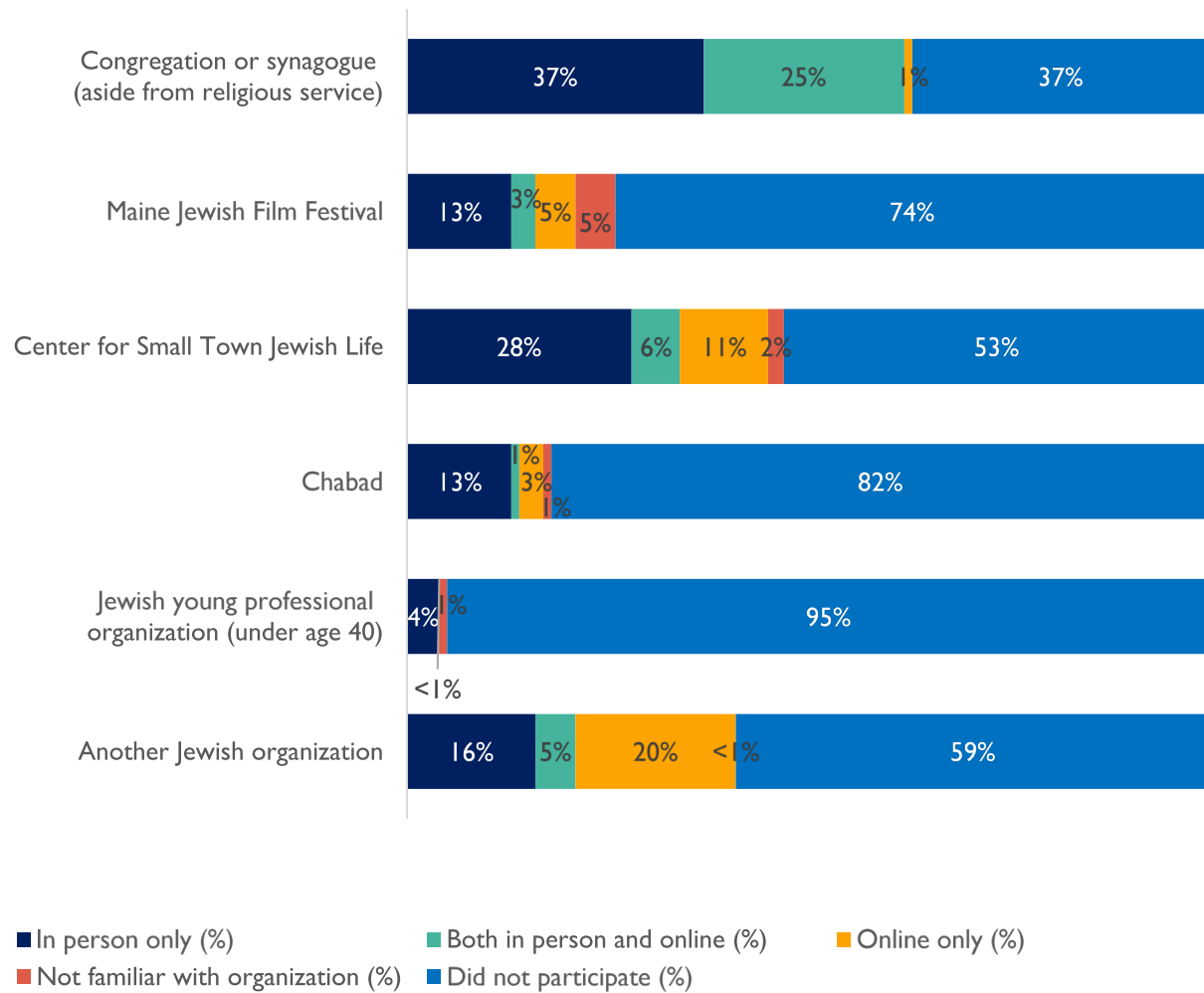
Among Jewish adults residing in Southern Maine who participated in a program, about half (51%) participated with a congregation or synagogue, with 34% doing so in person only, 3% participating online only, and 13% participating both in person and online (Figure 6.2). Forty-five percent participated with the JCA in Portland, with 34% doing so in-person only, 2% doing so online only, and 6% doing so both in person and online. Nine percent participated in a program sponsored by the Center for Small Town Jewish Life, with 4% doing so in-person only, 3% doing so online only, and 2% doing so both in-person and online. Of Jewish young adults residing in Southern Maine who are under age 40, 23% participated in a program sponsored by a Jewish young professional organization, such as OneTable or Moishe House.

Figure 6.2. Program sponsor, Southern Maine



Among Jewish adults residing in the Rest of Maine region who participated in a program, 63% did so with a congregation or synagogue, with 37% participating in person only, 1% participating online only, and 25% participating both in person and online (Figure 6.3). Forty-five percent participated in a program sponsored by the Center for Small Town Jewish Life, located in Waterville, with 28% participating in person only, 11% participating online only, and 6% participating both in person and online.

Figure 6.3. Program sponsor, Rest of Maine



Among engagement groups, the Immersed group was the most likely to participate in programs across multiple sponsors (Tables 6.6a and 6.6b). Even so, the Affiliated group also had high shares of adults participating in programs sponsored by the Maine Jewish Festival (28%), Chabad (19%), or another Jewish organization (44%).

Table 6.6a. Program sponsor

	Congregation or synagogue (%)	JCA of Southern Maine* (%)	Maine Jewish Film Festival (%)	Center for Small Town Jewish Life (%)
All Jewish adults	57	42	23	21
Jewish engagement				
Minimally Involved	23	52	17	8
Connected	54	31	14	16
Affiliated	54	46	28	19
Immersed	76	47	31	35
Region				
Southern Maine	51	43	20	9
Rest of Maine	63	0	28	45
Age				
18-39	62	44	14	24
40-54	61	42	12	19
55-64	48	37	33	20
65-74	39	53	32	26
75+	52	33	31	11
Relationship status				
Inmarried	50	41	25	26
Intermarried	56	48	21	17
Not married	63	29	22	22
Minor child in household				
No	51	40	26	21
Yes	70	50	11	22

* Asked only of respondents in Southern Maine.

Table 6.6b Program sponsor

	Chabad (%)	Jewish young professional organization (%)	Other (%)
All Jewish adults	17	15	25
Jewish engagement			
Minimally Involved	1	--	5
Connected	12	19	17
Affiliated	19	12	44
Immersed	28	19	42
Region			
Southern Maine	16	23	22
Rest of Maine	17	4	41
Age			
18-39	19	22	29
40-54	17	0	27
55-64	13	1	34
65-74	9	0	33
75+	23	0	18
Relationship status			
Inmarried	17	15	34
Intermarried	16	14	22
Not married	15	23	30
Minor child in household			
No	17	16	25
Yes	11	15	23

Barriers to participation

Seventy-two percent of Jewish adults in Maine who participate or are interested in participating in programs (hereafter, “interested in participating”) cited at least one barrier that limited their participation, including 67% of those who reside in Southern Maine and 79% of those who reside in the rest of the state (Table 6.7). The most common limitations cited are not having found Jewish programs of interest (32%), location not being convenient (30%), and not feeling confident in one’s Jewish knowledge (17%). Notably, residents of the Rest of Maine region who were interested in participating were twice as likely as their counterparts in Southern Maine to cite inconvenient program locations (43% versus 21%) and three times as likely to cite programs being too expensive (16% versus 5%) as barriers to participation in Jewish programs.

Table 6.7. Conditions limiting participation in Jewish programs

	Jewish adults who are interested in participating in programs (%)	Southern Maine (%)	Rest of Maine (%)
Any limitation	72	67	79
You haven't found Jewish programs that interest you	32	32	33
Location not convenient	30	21	43
You are not confident in your Jewish knowledge	17	12	24
You feel unwelcome	11	8	15
It's too expensive	10	5	16
Your political views are unwelcome	7	8	5
Safety or security concerns	7	7	6
Don't have enough time	2	3	<1
Health concerns	2	2	1
Other	10	7	14

Eleven percent of Jewish adults in Maine who are interested in participating in programs cited feeling unwelcome as a barrier to participation. Similarly, 11% of Jewish adults in Maine who have resided in the state for less than five years and are interested in participating in programs cited feeling unwelcome as a barrier, including 8% of those who reside in Southern Maine and 14% of those who reside in the rest of the state (Table 6.8). Fifteen percent of Jewish adults who have resided in the state between five to nine years and are interested in participating in programs cited feeling unwelcome as a barrier, including 13% of those who reside in Southern Maine and 18% of those who reside in the rest of the state.

Those who cited feeling unwelcome as a barrier were asked to explain why they felt this way. The most commonly cited reasons include differing attitudes on Israel and Zionism, differing political views, and feeling that the community is not welcoming to newcomers (not in table).

Table 6.8. Feeling unwelcome by length of residence

	Jewish adults who are interested in participating in programs (%)	Southern Maine (%)	Rest of Maine (%)
Less than 5 years	11	8	14
5-9 years	15	13	18
10-19 years	8	9	6
20 years or longer	10	6	15

Ten percent of Jewish adults who are interested in participating in programs cited cost as a barrier to participation. Among the members of this group, 26% who are struggling financially cited cost as a barrier, as did 12% of these who said they have just enough money (Table 6.9).

Table 6.9. Cost as a limitation by financial situation

	Jewish adults who are interested in participating in programs (%)
Struggling	26
Enough	12
Extra	1
Well-off	5

Seven percent of Jewish adults in Maine who are interested in participating in programs cited feeling their political views are unwelcome as a barrier to participation. The highest shares of Jewish adults who are interested in participating in programs but feel their political views are unwelcome identify as those who identify as very liberal (14%) or conservative or very conservative (11%).³⁵

Table 6.10. Feeling political views are unwelcome by political views

	Jewish adults who are interested in participating in programs (%)
Very liberal	14
Liberal	3
Moderate	5
Conservative / Very conservative	11

Seven percent of Jewish adults in Maine who are interested in participating in programs cited safety or security concerns as a barrier to participation. Ten percent of Jewish adults who are interested in participating in programs and said they are very concerned about antisemitism in Maine cited safety or security concerns as a barrier (Table 6.11; for more details on perceptions and experiences of antisemitism in Maine, see Chapter 7).

Table 6.11. Safety or security concerns as a limitation by concerns of antisemitism in Maine

	Jewish adults who are interested in participating in programs (%)
Not at all concerned	<1
Not too concerned	4
Somewhat concerned	6
Very concerned	10

Sources of information

Jewish adults in Maine access many sources of information about local Jewish activities, news and events. Fifty-two percent get their information from a Jewish organization's newsletter or email (Table 6.12). Thirty-seven percent of Jewish adults get their information from family or friends, and 33% get their information from social media.

Table 6.12. Sources of information about Jewish activities and news

	Jewish organization newsletter/email (%)	Family or friends (%)	Social media (%)
All Jewish adults	52	37	33
Jewish engagement			
Minimally Involved	26	25	17
Connected	63	43	40
Affiliated	71	43	54
Immersed	87	54	53
Region			
Southern Maine	57	38	37
Rest of Maine	46	35	31
Age			
18-39	51	43	44
40-54	53	38	43
55-64	42	43	29
65-74	56	30	28
75+	58	29	24
Relationship status			
Inmarried	59	34	34
Intermarried	50	37	33
Not married	46	45	44
Minor child in household			
No	52	38	32
Yes	60	35	41

Informal cultural activities and social media activities

Informal cultural activities include those Jewish activities that are not necessarily sponsored or facilitated by Jewish organizations, such as discussing Jewish topics, eating Jewish foods, or reading Jewish books (Tables 6.13a and 6.13b), each of which attracts different demographics. Nearly all Jewish adults in Maine (96%) discussed Jewish events with family or friends in the past year, including 49% who did so often. Eighty-six percent of Jewish adults read books, watched movies or TV, or listened to music that was Jewish-focused, including 22% who did so often. Eighty-four percent of Jewish adults ate Jewish foods, including 26% who did so often.³⁶ Eighty-two percent of Jewish adults read Jewish publications, including 23% who did so often. Forty-three percent of Jewish adults studied Jewish texts, including 11% who did so often.

Jewish adults in the Minimally Involved group participated in informal Jewish activities less often than members of the other engagement groups. Jewish adults ages 75 and older discussed Jewish events with family or friends less than younger adults. Jewish adults ages 18-39 (34%) were significantly more likely to consume Jewish-related media often compared to older Jewish adults.

Table 6.13a. Individual Jewish activities, past year

Talk about Jewish events			Read books, watch movies or TV, listen to music		Eat Jewish foods	
	Ever (%)	Often (%)	Ever (%)	Often (%)	Ever (%)	Often (%)
All Jewish adults	96	49	86	22	84	26
Jewish engagement						
Minimally Involved	90	25	77	2	68	5
Connected	98	35	88	<1	96	21
Affiliated	100	84	100	65	100	40
Immersed	100	91	98	68	98	76
Region						
Southern Maine	96	49	85	21	90	25
Rest of Maine	94	44	91	22	78	27
Age						
18-39	99	60	88	34	86	26
40-54	97	41	90	16	92	27
55-64	98	55	85	22	72	23
65-74	96	39	87	17	89	26
75+	82	35	86	14	83	26
Relationship status						
Inmarried	98	52	93	26	86	32
Intermarried	95	45	84	18	82	22
Not married	91	43	86	24	86	24
Minor child in household						
No	95	49	85	22	84	26
Yes	96	50	94	23	93	27

Table 6.13b. Individual Jewish activities, past year

Read Jewish publications			Study Jewish texts	
	Ever (%)	Often (%)	Ever (%)	Often (%)
All Jewish adults	82	23	43	11
Jewish engagement				
Minimally Involved	65	2	10	0
Connected	89	2	53	<1
Affiliated	99	72	69	5
Immersed	100	69	98	65
Region				
Southern Maine	81	24	43	9
Rest of Maine	85	22	46	12
Age				
18-39	90	31	58	15
40-54	85	18	43	10
55-64	82	21	37	8
65-74	78	20	39	8
75+	74	21	39	7
Relationship status				
Inmarried	85	27	50	13
Intermarried	80	20	38	8
Not married	83	24	54	13
Minor child in household				
No	79	25	43	11
Yes	90	22	52	12

Fifty-eight percent of Jewish adults in Maine read or viewed content about Jewish life on social media in the past year (Table 6.14). Forty-one percent followed or belonged to an online group with Jewish content. Twenty-three percent posted about Jewish life on social media in the past year.

Table 6.14. Social media activities, past year

	All Jewish adults (%)	Southern Maine (%)	Rest of Maine (%)
Read or view content about Jewish life on social media	58	59	53
Follow or belong to an online group with Jewish content	41	38	43
Post about Jewish life on social media	23	23	21

Volunteering and philanthropy

About half of Jewish adults in Maine (53%) volunteered somewhere in the past year, with 4% volunteering exclusively with Jewish organizations, 31% volunteering exclusively with non-Jewish organizations, and 19% volunteering with both Jewish and non-Jewish organizations (Table 6.15).

The types and extent of participation in volunteer activities differed based on respondent characteristics. Members of the Immersed group were the most likely to volunteer (82%) and to do so with Jewish organizations (74%). Members of the Minimally Involved group were the least likely to volunteer (45%), and almost all who volunteered did so exclusively with non-Jewish organizations (44%).

Table 6.15. Volunteering in past year

	Jewish only (%)	Both Jewish and non-Jewish (%)	Non-Jewish only (%)	Did not volunteer / Don't know (%)	Total (%)
All Jewish adults	4	19	31	47	100
Jewish engagement					
Minimally Involved	<1	1	44	55	100
Connected	3	18	29	50	100
Affiliated	3	31	20	45	100
Immersed	16	58	8	18	100
Region					
Southern Maine	4	19	29	49	100
Rest of Maine	3	18	34	45	100
Age					
18-39	6	19	19	56	100
40-54	4	22	37	37	100
55-64	3	16	41	39	100
65-74	3	19	33	44	100
75+	2	13	21	64	100
Relationship status					
Inmarried	5	25	20	49	100
Intermarried	3	14	40	42	100
Not married	4	19	19	59	100
Minor child in household					
No	4	19	32	45	100
Yes	2	22	33	43	100

Eighty-five percent of Jewish households in Maine made charitable donations in the past year, with 2% donating exclusively to Jewish organizations, 37% donating exclusively to non-Jewish organizations, and 46% donating to both Jewish and non-Jewish organizations (Table 6.16).³⁷ Immersed households were the most likely to make a charitable donation (95%), with almost all donating to both Jewish and non-Jewish organizations (90%). Most Connected (60%) and Affiliated (60%) households donated to both Jewish and non-Jewish organizations. Minimally Involved households were the most likely to donate exclusively to non-Jewish households (61%).

One quarter of Jewish households in Southern Maine (25%) made a donation to the Jewish Community Alliance of Southern Maine.

Table 6.16. Donations in past year

	Jewish only (%)	Both Jewish and non-Jewish (%)	Non-Jewish only (%)	Did not donate/Don't know (%)	Total (%)	Jewish Community Alliance of Southern Maine* (%)
All Jewish households	2	46	37	16	100	25
Jewish engagement						
Minimally Involved	0	19	61	20	100	12
Connected	1	60	22	17	100	27
Affiliated	5	60	19	15	100	25
Immersed	5	90	<1	5	100	31
Region						
Southern Maine	2	48	39	11	100	25
Rest of Maine	2	43	33	22	100	N/A
Age						
18-39	2	41	38	20	100	28
40-54	1	47	38	14	100	24
55-64	1	32	45	22	100	22
65-74	2	49	35	14	100	26
75+	2	58	29	11	100	31
Relationship status						
Inmarried	2	61	21	16	100	31
Intermarried	1	40	43	16	100	21
Not married	5	45	33	17	100	30
Minor child in household						
No	2	45	36	16	100	25
Yes	1	48	39	13	100	27

* Asked only of respondents in Southern Maine.

CHAPTER 7. ANTISEMITISM

Chapter highlights

This chapter focuses on Jewish adults' concerns about antisemitism, as well as their personal experiences with antisemitic incidents in the past year.

- Seventy-four percent of Jewish adults in Maine are somewhat concerned (44%) or very concerned (30%) about antisemitism in the state.
- Ninety-three percent of Jewish adults in Maine are somewhat concerned (30%) or very concerned (63%) about antisemitism in the United States.
- Ninety-four percent of Jewish adults in Maine are somewhat concerned (22%) or very concerned (72%) about antisemitism around the world.
- Fifty-two percent of Jewish adults in Maine have avoided activities in the past year due to fear of antisemitism.
- In the past year, 35% of Jewish adults in Maine have experienced verbal remarks, acts of vandalism, or physical threats or attacks motivated by antisemitism.

Concern about antisemitism

Most Jewish adults in Maine express concern about antisemitism within the state, with 44% somewhat concerned and 30% very concerned (Figure 7.1). They are even more concerned about antisemitism at the national level, with 30% somewhat concerned and 63% very concerned (Figure 7.2). When considering antisemitism around the globe, Jewish adults in Maine are even more concerned, with 22% somewhat concerned and 72% very concerned (Figure 7.3).

Jewish residents of Southern Maine consistently report higher levels of concern about antisemitism at all levels—state, national, and global—compared to their counterparts in the rest of the state. For example, 33% of Jewish adults in Southern Maine are very concerned about antisemitism in Maine, compared to 25% in the rest of the state.

Figure 7.1. Concern about antisemitism in Maine

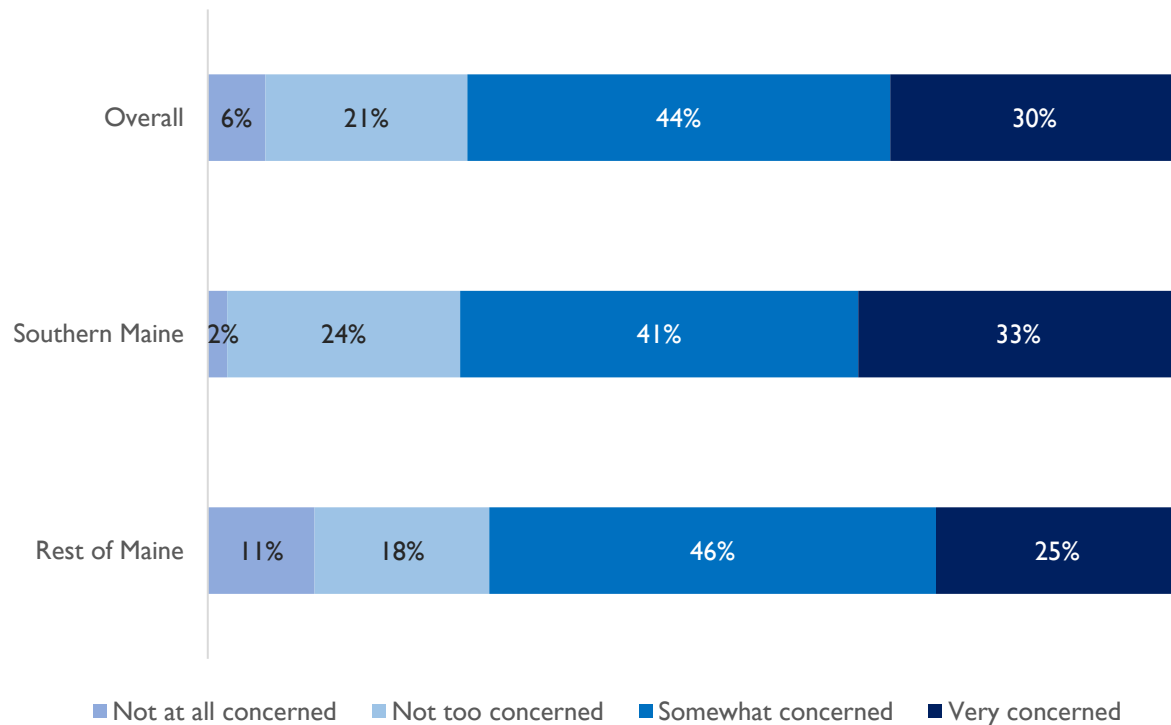


Figure 7.2. Concern about antisemitism in the United States

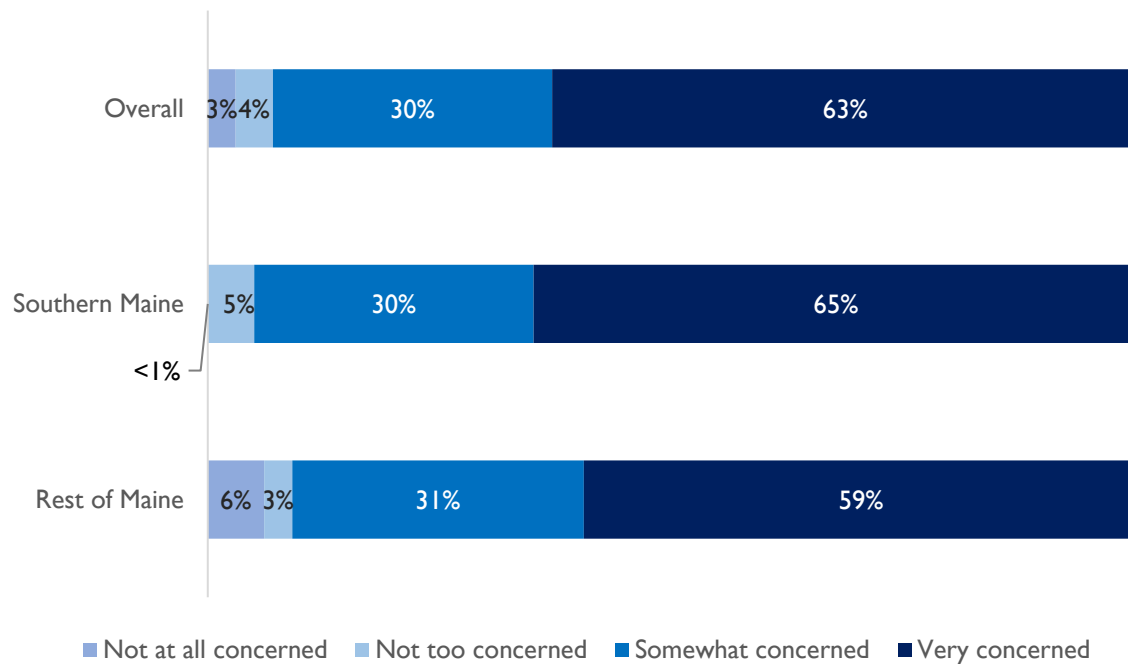
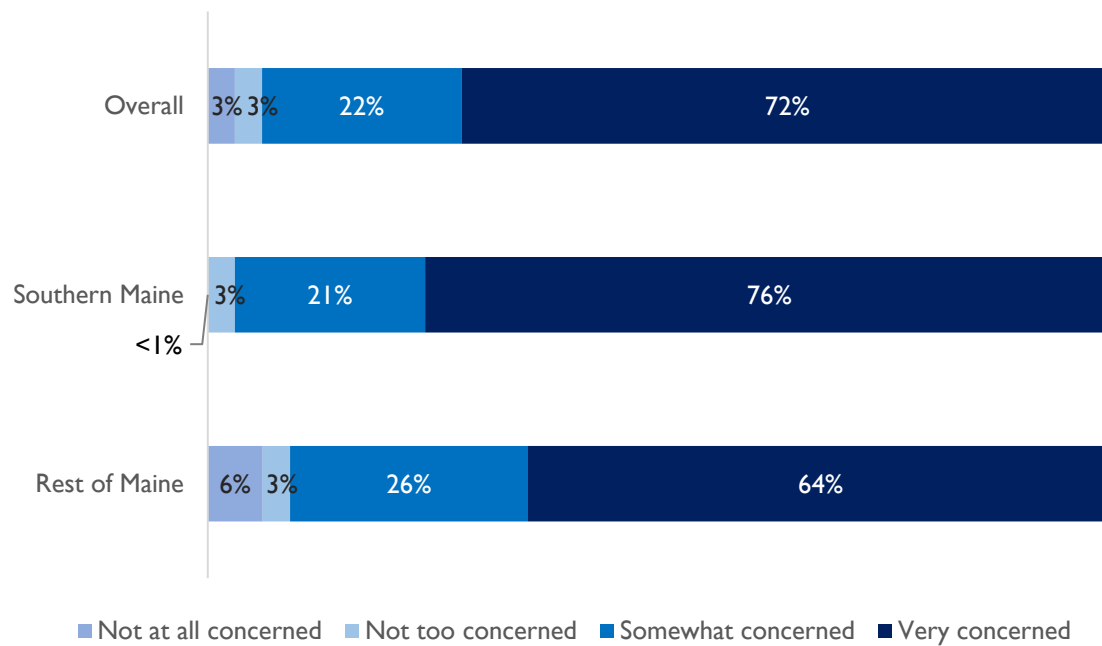


Figure 7.3. Concern about antisemitism around the world



Jewish adults' concern about antisemitism in Maine varies by engagement group and age (Table 7.1). Among Affiliated Jewish adults, 45% are very concerned about antisemitism in Maine, compared to 25% among the Minimally Involved. Similarly, concern at the national (77%) and global (82%) levels is highest among the Affiliated group. Additionally, older Jewish adults are more likely to be very concerned about antisemitism than younger Jewish adults. Only 21% of Jewish adults ages 18-39 are very concerned about antisemitism in Maine, compared to 44% of those ages 65-74. This trend holds at the national and global levels as well, where Jewish adults between ages 55-74 report the highest concern about antisemitism.

Table 7.1. Very concerned about antisemitism...

	In Maine (%)	In the United States (%)	Around the world (%)
All Jewish adults	30	63	72
Jewish engagement			
Minimally Involved	25	55	69
Connected	28	62	66
Affiliated	45	77	82
Immersed	31	70	74
Region			
Southern Maine	33	65	76
Rest of Maine	25	59	64
Age			
18-39	21	45	57
40-54	20	55	61
55-64	37	79	85
65-74	44	76	83
75+	31	70	79
Relationship status			
Inmarried	37	66	76
Intermarried	24	60	68
Not married	32	64	70
Minor child in household			
No	32	63	74
Yes	24	65	67
Experienced antisemitism			
No	26	62	73
Yes	37	65	70
Political views			
Very liberal	19	48	52
Liberal	33	69	77
Moderate	32	64	77
Conservative or very conservative	37	74	84

Changing behavior due to fear of antisemitism

Table 7.2 illustrates the degree to which Jewish adults in Maine have changed their behavior in the past year due to fear of antisemitism. Overall, 52% of Jewish adults report that they have avoided activities in the past year due to fear of antisemitism. The most commonly avoided action is going to certain places or events (37%), followed by wearing or displaying objects that identify them as Jews (31%) and posting Jewish content online (31%). Among Jewish adults very concerned about antisemitism, 42% have avoided certain places, and 38% have avoided mentioning Israel. Among Jewish adults who are not too concerned about antisemitism, only 25% have avoided certain places or events, and 10% have avoided mentioning Israel. Notably, the youngest Jewish adults in the Maine Jewish community, those ages 18-39, have changed their behavior more than older adults due to fear of antisemitism.

Table 7.2. Avoided out of fear of antisemitism (past year)

	Any (%)	Going to certain places or events (%)	Wearing or displaying objects that would identify you as a Jew (%)	Posting Jewish content online that would identify you as a Jew (%)	Mentioning Israel, whether in-person or online (%)
All Jewish adults	52	37	31	31	21
Jewish engagement					
Minimally Involved	40	27	21	25	9
Connected	51	33	30	26	17
Affiliated	71	46	45	34	44
Immersed	57	45	38	37	34
Region					
Southern Maine	53	38	29	30	24
Rest of Maine	46	35	32	34	15
Age					
18-39	71	51	50	43	36
40-54	53	41	26	25	21
55-64	47	35	32	32	15
65-74	41	23	18	19	16
75+	28	9	18	20	8
Relationship status					
Inmarried	41	28	22	22	16
Intermarried	53	39	31	32	23
Not married	62	34	45	35	23
Minor child in household					
No	49	32	30	31	20
Yes	56	45	32	31	27
Experienced antisemitism					
No	44	28	21	20	15
Yes	62	46	46	44	32
Political views					
Very liberal	45	28	22	20	14
Liberal	52	38	26	30	23
Moderate	58	40	47	39	25
Conservative or very conservative	38	27	24	22	19
Concern antisemitism: Maine					
Not at all concerned	--	--	--	--	--
Not too concerned	40	25	15	17	10
Somewhat concerned	53	36	33	30	16
Very concerned	59	42	38	38	36

Personal experiences of antisemitism

In the past year, 35% of Jewish adults in Maine experienced antisemitic verbal remarks, acts of vandalism, or physical threats or attacks, including 28% of Jewish adults in Southern Maine and 44% of Jewish adults in the rest of the state. Verbal antisemitic remarks were the most common experience, with 27% of Jewish adults in Maine encountering antisemitic remarks from strangers and 23% from someone they know. Antisemitic acts of vandalism (2%) and physical threats or attacks (1%) were much less frequently reported.

Seven percent of Jewish adults in Maine say that safety or security concerns have limited their participation in programs sponsored by the Maine Jewish community.

Table 7.3. Personally been target of... (past year)

	Any (%)	An antisemitic remark from someone you don't know (%)	An antisemitic remark from someone you know (%)	An antisemitic act of vandalism (%)	An antisemitic physical attack or threat of attack (%)
All Jewish adults	35	27	23	2	1
Jewish engagement					
Minimally Involved	31	23	20	1	0
Connected	23	17	11	2	<1
Affiliated	55	42	46	3	1
Immersed	44	38	28	5	4
Region					
Southern Maine	28	23	18	2	1
Rest of Maine	44	31	30	1	<1
Age					
18-39	43	28	33	2	2
40-54	39	36	27	2	<1
55-64	40	34	17	<1	0
65-74	28	23	20	1	1
75+	18	9	14	4	0
Relationship status					
Inmarried	33	18	23	2	<1
Intermarried	35	31	22	1	1
Not married	36	30	23	5	<1
Minor child in household					
No	31	25	19	2	<1
Yes	40	37	30	2	3
Political views					
Very liberal	28	23	22	1	<1
Liberal	26	20	15	3	<1
Moderate	58	43	36	2	3
Conservative or very conservative	37	32	29	<1	0
Concern antisemitism: Maine					
Not at all concerned	--	--	--	--	--
Not too concerned	17	14	6	2	<1
Somewhat concerned	34	28	19	1	<1
Very concerned	43	36	34	4	2

CHAPTER 8. CONNECTIONS TO ISRAEL

Chapter highlights

Jewish adults in Maine have a diversity of opinions regarding the State of Israel. Israel plays a vital role in the Jewish identity of many Jewish adults in Maine, but for others, the country's relationship to their lives is less significant. Jewish adults in Maine travel to Israel at rates similar to the national Jewish community.

- Forty-seven percent of Jewish adults in Maine have visited Israel at least once.
- Fifty-seven percent of Jewish adults in Maine are somewhat (31%) or very much emotionally attached (26%) to Israel.
- In the aftermath of the Hamas-led and -coordinated armed incursions into Israel on October 7, 2023, 49% of Jewish adults in Maine felt somewhat (28%) or much more attached (21%) to Israel. Twenty-two percent felt somewhat (11%) or much less attached (11%), and 29% experienced no change in their attachment.
- Eighty percent of Jewish adults in Maine follow news about Israel somewhat (43%) or very closely (37%).
- Thirty-seven percent of Jewish adults in Maine somewhat (16%) or strongly agree (21%) that they describe themselves as Zionists. Forty-four percent somewhat (8%) or strongly disagree (36%), and 19% have no opinion or are not sure. Nevertheless, there is still strong support for a variety of pro-Israel views within the community.

Travel to Israel

Half of Jewish adults (47%) in Maine have been to Israel at least once (Table 8.1), similar to the national proportion of 45%.³⁸ This share includes 23% who have visited Israel once, 16% who have visited Israel more than once, and 8% who have previously lived in Israel. Nearly three quarters (70%) of the Minimally Involved group have never been to Israel, whereas the majority (68%) of the Immersed group has traveled to Israel at least once, including 21% who have lived there.

More than half of inmarried Jewish adults (57%) have been to Israel at least once. By contrast, smaller shares of their intermarried (44%) and unmarried (39%) counterparts have ever been to Israel.

Compared to Jewish adults who are more attached to Israel, smaller shares of those not at all attached to Israel have traveled to Israel. A significant majority of Jewish adults not at all attached to Israel (84%) has never been to Israel, whereas 78% of Jewish adults who are very much attached to Israel have been there at least once or lived there.

Table 8.1. Travel to Israel

	Never (%)	Once (%)	More than once (%)	Lived in Israel (%)	Total (%)
All Jewish adults	53	23	16	8	100
Jewish engagement					
Minimally Involved	70	21	7	2	100
Connected	50	24	21	5	100
Affiliated	31	29	26	14	100
Immersed	32	22	25	21	100
Region					
Southern Maine	50	24	17	9	100
Rest of Maine	57	22	15	6	100
Age					
18-39	49	30	12	9	100
40-54	49	23	18	10	100
55-64	59	18	16	8	100
65-74	55	23	18	4	100
75+	57	21	17	5	100
Relationship status					
Inmarried	43	23	23	10	100
Intermarried	56	25	12	6	100
Not married	61	19	15	5	100
Minor child in household					
No	54	22	17	7	100
Yes	45	29	16	10	100
Israel attachment					
Not at all attached	84	4	11	<1	100
Not too attached	62	31	6	1	100
Somewhat attached	52	28	16	4	100
Very attached	22	25	29	23	100

Emotional attachment to Israel

Nationally, 58% of Jewish adults in the United States are somewhat or very attached to Israel.³⁹ A similar share of Jewish adults in Maine are attached to Israel, with 57% somewhat (31%) or very much (26%) attached (Table 8.2). Israel attachment varies significantly by engagement group. For example, 38% of the Minimally Involved group are somewhat (27%) or very attached (11%) to Israel; by contrast, in the Immersed group, 83% of Jewish adults are somewhat (31%) or very attached (52%) to Israel.

The majority of Jewish adults in Maine who have never been to Israel are not at all (30%) or not too (28%) attached to Israel. Those who have been to Israel more than once or lived in Israel include

much larger shares of those who are attached to Israel; large majorities of both groups are somewhat or very attached to Israel.

There are no statistically significant differences in attachment to Israel between regions, age groups, relationship statuses, or households with or without minor children.

Table 8.2. Emotional attachment to Israel

	Not at all (%)	Not too (%)	Somewhat (%)	Very (%)	Total (%)
All Jewish adults	19	24	31	26	100
Jewish engagement					
Minimally Involved	31	30	27	11	100
Connected	16	26	39	20	100
Affiliated	8	13	29	51	100
Immersed	3	14	31	52	100
Region					
Southern Maine	18	21	34	28	100
Rest of Maine	21	28	27	24	100
Age					
18-39	29	20	28	23	100
40-54	23	22	27	27	100
55-64	14	35	30	21	100
65-74	9	21	40	30	100
75+	13	23	31	34	100
Relationship status					
Inmarried	18	15	35	32	100
Intermarried	19	30	29	23	100
Not married	21	24	28	27	100
Minor child in household					
No	16	26	32	26	100
Yes	22	21	28	29	100
Israel travel					
Never	30	28	31	11	100
Once	3	31	37	29	100
More than once	13	9	31	47	100
I lived in Israel	1	3	16	79	100

Forty-nine percent of Maine Jewish adults reported that they were somewhat more (28%) or much more (21%) attached to Israel in the aftermath of the Hamas-led and -coordinated armed incursions into Israel on October 7, 2023, and the subsequent war that is still ongoing as this report is being written (Table 8.3). Less than a quarter of Jewish adults reported that they were much less (11%) or somewhat less (11%) attached to Israel after October 7, while 29% did not experience a change in their level of attachment to Israel.

Changes in attachment to Israel after October 7 varied significantly by engagement group. Members of the Affiliated group reported the largest share who felt their attachment to Israel increase, with nearly two thirds who felt somewhat more (25%) or much more attached (39%) to Israel than before October 7. By contrast, 40% of Jewish adults in the Minimally Involved and Connected groups felt somewhat more (28% in each group) or much more (12% in each group) attached to Israel after October 7.

Nearly one quarter of Jewish adults ages 18-34 (23%) reported feeling much less attached to Israel than before October 7, more than twice the share of any other age group.

Among Jewish adults who were very attached to Israel at the time of the survey, 52% felt much more attached to Israel than they were before October 7; for 25%, their level of attachment had not changed. For those who were not at all attached to Israel, 31% felt much less attached to Israel than before the war; for 50%, their attachment to Israel had not changed.

Table 8.3. Change in Israel attachment, post-October 7

	Much less than before (%)	Somewhat less than before (%)	No change (%)	Somewhat more than before (%)	Much more than before (%)	Total (%)
All Jewish adults	11	11	29	28	21	100
Jewish engagement						
Minimally						
Involved	17	12	31	28	12	100
Connected	9	13	39	28	12	100
Affiliated	9	7	21	25	39	100
Immersed	3	11	25	25	36	100
Region						
Southern						
Maine	13	13	27	26	21	100
Rest of Maine	9	8	32	30	21	100
Age						
18-39	23	11	29	19	19	100
40-54	9	15	34	27	15	100
55-64	6	12	24	44	14	100
65-74	4	9	37	22	28	100
75+	10	8	29	27	25	100
Relationship status						
Inmarried	14	8	28	28	22	100
Intermarried	11	13	33	26	18	100
Not married	9	10	30	30	22	100
Minor child in household						
No	10	13	28	28	21	100
Yes	8	7	33	31	23	100
Israel travel						
Never	16	10	29	30	15	100
Ever	7	12	29	25	28	100
Israel attachment						
Not at all	31	9	50	9	<1	100
Not too	14	16	23	42	5	100
attached						
Somewhat	7	16	30	31	16	100
attached						
Very	1	2	25	21	52	100
attached						

Israel-related activities

Eighty percent of Jewish adults in Maine follow news about Israel somewhat (43%) or very closely (37%; Table 8.4). A majority of all of the Jewish engagement groups follows news about Israel at least somewhat closely, including nearly all Jewish adults in the Affiliated group (98%).

Jewish adults in Maine who have traveled to Israel more than once or who once lived there tend to follow news about Israel more closely than those who have only visited once or who never traveled to Israel. Similarly, Jewish adults who are somewhat or very emotionally attached to Israel follow news about Israel more closely than those who are not at all or not too attached.

Table 8.4. News about Israel

	Not at all closely (%)	Not too closely (%)	Somewhat closely (%)	Very closely (%)	Total (%)
All Jewish adults	5	15	43	37	100
Jewish engagement					
Minimally Involved	5	18	51	21	100
Connected	3	22	51	25	100
Affiliated	<1	2	18	79	100
Immersed	1	13	30	56	100
Region					
Southern Maine	3	15	45	37	100
Rest of Maine	8	17	39	36	100
Age					
18-39	10	21	40	28	100
40-54	2	15	55	29	100
55-64	6	18	43	33	100
65-74	5	10	39	47	100
75+	<1	10	36	54	100
Relationship status					
Inmarried	8	17	31	44	100
Intermarried	4	17	47	32	100
Not married	2	9	51	39	100
Minor child in household					
No	4	14	43	39	100
Yes	2	15	49	34	100
Israel travel					
Never	8	15	48	28	100
Once	1	24	36	38	100
More than once	3	9	42	46	100
I lived in Israel	0	2	25	73	100
Israel attachment					
Not at all attached	24	17	46	13	100
Not too attached	1	23	53	23	100
Somewhat attached	<1	19	51	30	100
Very attached	1	5	20	75	100

Impact of October 7

After October 7, Maine Jewish adults who were already more engaged in Jewish life participated in Israel-related activities in larger shares compared to those who were less engaged in Jewish life,

including activities that expressed support or solidarity with Palestinians (Tables 8.5a and 8.5b). Thirty-one percent of all Jewish adults in Maine made donations in support of Israelis or Palestinians in the aftermath of October 7, including 22% who made emergency donations to Israel and 16% who made emergency donations to Palestinians. The more Jewish adults expressed their feelings of attachment to Israel, the more likely they were to donate to Israel; however, there was no statistically significant difference in emergency donations to Palestinians by degree of emotional attachment to Israel. More Jewish adults ages 18-39 participated in activities that expressed support or solidarity with Palestinians than did older adults. More Jewish adults in the Affiliated (27%) and Immersed (26%) engagement groups made emergency donations to Palestinians than did Jewish adults in the Minimally Involved or Connected groups (8% and 13%, respectively). Similarly, more Jewish adults in the Affiliated (14%) and Immersed (13%) engagement groups participated in rallies or events expressing solidarity with Palestinians than did Jewish adults in the Minimally Involved or Connected groups (3% and 5%, respectively).

Table 8.5a. Israel-related activities since October 7 by subgroup

	Made a special donation of money or goods in emergency aid to Israel or Palestinians (%)	Made a special donation of money or goods in emergency aid to Israel (%)	Made a special donation of money or goods in emergency aid to Palestinians (%)	Attended a program or briefing about the Israel/Palestine conflict (%)
All Jewish adults	31	22	16	25
Jewish engagement				
Minimally Involved	13	6	8	6
Connected	26	18	13	21
Affiliated	59	47	27	45
Immersed	65	57	26	55
Region				
Southern Maine	36	25	17	26
Rest of Maine	26	21	13	19
Age				
18-39	40	25	28	23
40-54	24	16	10	28
55-64	28	23	7	21
65-74	30	26	13	22
75+	31	28	8	21
Relationship status				
Inmarried	40	34	15	28
Intermarried	26	18	15	20
Not married	32	19	18	26
Minor child in household				
No	34	25	18	25
Yes	29	22	10	24
Israel travel				
Never	18	9	12	16
Once	40	31	17	26
More than once	52	46	16	36
I lived in Israel	58	49	32	37
Israel attachment				
Not at all attached	23	4	21	14
Not too attached	17	8	14	19
Somewhat attached	29	22	12	27
Very attached	55	54	16	31

Table 8.5b. Israel-related activities since October 7 by subgroup

	Attended a rally/event expressing support/solidarity with Israel or Palestinians (%)	Attended a rally/event expressing support/solidarity with Israel (%)	Attended a rally/event expressing support/solidarity with Palestinians (%)	Something else ⁴⁰ (%)
All Jewish adults	17	11	7	10
Jewish engagement				
Minimally Involved	3	<1	3	7
Connected	13	8	5	3
Affiliated	31	18	14	17
Immersed	43	36	13	17
Region				
Southern Maine	20	12	9	10
Rest of Maine	11	7	4	9
Age				
18-39	26	13	16	15
40-54	16	12	5	9
55-64	14	11	3	5
65-74	8	5	2	10
75+	9	8	1	4
Relationship status				
Inmarried	18	14	5	6
Intermarried	14	8	7	12
Not married	20	10	12	5
Minor child in household				
No	17	10	7	10
Yes	18	12	8	8
Israel travel				
Never	10	4	7	7
Once	12	6	6	10
More than once	29	23	7	10
I lived in Israel	46	39	11	20
Israel attachment				
Not at all attached	18	3	16	2
Not too attached	4	1	4	2
Somewhat attached	14	9	7	12
Very attached	28	26	3	19

Views about Israel

Tables 8.6a and 8.6b display the extent to which Jewish adults in Maine agree or disagree with a series of statements about Israel. Nearly all Jewish adults (91%) agree that it is important for Israel to be a democratic state, including 86% who strongly agree. Most contested among Maine’s Jewish community is whether they know enough to participate in conversations about Israel; 58% of Jewish adults do not agree that they do, including 31% who strongly feel this way. Nearly half of Jewish adults (47%) have no opinion or feel unsure that local Jewish organizations share their views about Israel.

Notably, although Jewish adults in Maine agree with many of these statements that express positive sentiments about Israel, only 37% agree that they consider themselves to be Zionists. Forty-four percent say they are not Zionists, and 19% say they have no opinion or are unsure whether they would consider themselves Zionists.

Table 8.6a. Views about Israel, all Jewish adults

	Strongly disagree (%)	Somewhat disagree (%)	Somewhat agree (%)	Strongly agree (%)	No opinion/not sure (%)	Total (%)
I consider it important for Israel to be a democratic state.	2	<1	5	86	5	100
I consider it important for Israel to exist as refuge for the Jewish people, now and in the future.	7	5	20	67	2	100
American Jews have the right to criticize Israel’s government.	5	4	23	64	4	100
I consider it important for Israel to be a Jewish state.	10	9	21	54	7	100
I feel proud of Israel’s accomplishments.	10	12	26	46	7	100

Table 8.6b. Views about Israel, all Jewish adults

	Strongly disagree (%)	Somewhat disagree (%)	Somewhat agree (%)	Strongly agree (%)	No opinion/not sure (%)	Total (%)
I think that Israel regularly violates the human rights of the Palestinian people.	12	17	30	32	9	100
I consider myself to be a Zionist.	36	8	16	21	19	100
I feel that local Jewish organizations share my views about Israel.	10	10	21	11	47	100
I often feel I don't know enough to participate in conversations about Israel.	31	27	29	8	5	100

Although there is broad consensus among Jewish adults in Maine on many perspectives about Israel, there is significant variation between subgroups within the community (Table 8.7a and 8.7b). For example, compared to other engagement groups, a greater share of Jewish adults from the Affiliated group strongly agree about the importance for Israel to exist as a refuge for the Jewish people, now and in the future; more members of this group also feel proud of Israel's accomplishments. Older age groups also tend to more strongly agree with these statements than do younger groups; older Jewish adults also tend to more strongly believe that it is important for Israel to be a Jewish state.

Among Jewish adults in Maine, greater emotional attachment to Israel is associated with stronger agreement with most of the statements described in these tables. The exception concerns the right of American Jews to criticize the Israeli government. Those who are very attached to Israel have the smallest share who strongly agree with the statement that American Jews have the right to criticize the Israeli government. However, this share of agreement is still substantial (45%). Similarly, adults who have traveled to Israel at least once are more likely to agree with most of the statements assessed in the survey, though those who have lived in Israel are less likely to agree strongly that American Jews have the right to criticize Israel's government. Notably, those with conservative political views are more likely than adults with liberal views to agree strongly that they consider it important for Israel to exist as a refuge for the Jewish people, they consider it important for Israel to be a Jewish state, and they are proud of Israel's accomplishments. However, the more liberal Jewish adults in Maine are, the more strongly they agree that American Jews have the right to criticize Israel's government.

Table 8.7a. Views about Israel, strongly agree

	I consider it important for Israel to be a democratic state (%)	I consider it important for Israel to exist as refuge for the Jewish people, now and in the future (%)	American Jews have the right to criticize Israel's government (%)	I consider it important for Israel to be a Jewish state (%)	I feel proud of Israel's accomplish ments (%)
All Jewish adults	86	67	64	54	46
Jewish engagement					
Minimally Involved	84	58	62	46	37
Connected	86	62	68	49	42
Affiliated	91	82	63	67	60
Immersed	92	80	64	61	56
Region					
Southern Maine	85	69	69	56	44
Rest of Maine	89	62	57	48	47
Age					
18-39	80	45	69	26	18
40-54	92	63	75	51	40
55-64	89	80	56	76	65
65-74	88	76	63	64	50
75+	84	80	47	55	69
Relationship status					
Inmarried	87	69	70	57	51
Intermarried	90	66	62	52	40
Not married	75	59	58	47	50
Minor child in household					
No	85	70	61	55	47
Yes	93	63	70	50	41

Table 8.7b. Views about Israel, strongly agree

	I consider it important for Israel to be a democratic state (%)	I consider it important for Israel to exist as refuge for the Jewish people, now and in the future (%)	American Jews have the right to criticize Israel's government (%)	I consider it important for Israel to be a Jewish state (%)	I feel proud of Israel's accomplish ments (%)
All Jewish adults	86	67	64	54	46
Israel travel					
Never	82	57	64	47	38
Once	91	72	69	52	44
More than once	95	82	63	64	53
I lived in Israel	93	83	49	63	74
Israel attachment					
Not at all attached	72	17	81	16	10
Not too attached	88	60	62	45	35
Somewhat attached	89	76	71	57	45
Very attached	95	96	45	82	78
Political views					
Very Liberal	85	41	80	23	20
Liberal	86	75	69	57	47
Moderate	91	73	50	68	58
Conservative or very conservative ⁴¹	88	95	20	93	85

Compared to Jewish adults in the Immersed and Affiliated groups, greater shares of those in both the Minimally Involved and Connected groups feel that they do not know enough to participate in conversations about Israel (Table 8.7c). Jewish adults with stronger attachments to Israel are more likely to agree strongly with the statements “I consider myself to be a Zionist” and “I feel that local Jewish organizations share my views about Israel” (Table 8.7d). However, the opposite trend can be seen for the statement, “I think that Israel regularly violates the human rights of the Palestinian people,” where those less attached to Israel tend to agree more strongly.

Table 8.7c. Views about Israel, strongly agree

	I think that Israel regularly violates the human rights of the Palestinian people (%)	I consider myself to be a Zionist (%)	I feel that local Jewish organizations share my views about Israel (%)	I often feel I don't know enough to participate in conversations about Israel (%)
All Jewish adults	32	21	11	8
Jewish engagement				
Minimally Involved	37	4	4	10
Connected	32	15	15	10
Affiliated	29	46	17	2
Immersed	35	45	17	4
Region				
Southern Maine	31	21	12	8
Rest of Maine	38	18	9	8
Age				
18-39	43	19	8	10
40-54	36	24	8	7
55-64	22	19	9	5
65-74	33	19	12	4
75+	25	18	23	16
Relationship status				
Inmarried	30	26	15	7
Intermarried	38	16	9	7
Not married	28	21	10	16
Minor child in household				
No	32	18	12	9
Yes	37	30	9	7

Table 8.7d. Views about Israel, strongly agree

	I think that Israel regularly violates the human rights of the Palestinian people (%)	I consider myself to be a Zionist (%)	I feel that local Jewish organizations share my views about Israel (%)	I often feel I don't know enough to participate in conversations about Israel (%)
All Jewish adults	32	21	11	8
Israel travel				
Never	35	8	9	9
Once	33	18	13	9
More than once	33	37	13	7
I lived in Israel	28	72	15	1
Israel attachment				
Not at all attached	58	1	1	8
Not too attached	43	1	4	10
Somewhat attached	28	13	12	11
Very attached	15	59	23	3
Political views				
Very Liberal	65	7	7	5
Liberal	29	22	12	13
Moderate	17	28	10	4
Conservative or very	2	33	26	2

Forty-one percent of Jewish adults in Maine believe that caring about Israel is an essential part of being Jewish. Another 36% of Jewish adults agree that caring about Israel is important but not essential, and 22% consider caring about Israel not to be important to being Jewish.

Thirty-seven percent of Jewish adults in Maine have avoided mentioning Israel online or in person out of fear of antisemitism in the past year.

CHAPTER 9. FINANCIAL WELL-BEING

Chapter highlights

Jewish organizations in Maine 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 US Jewish community, the Maine Jewish community is highly educated and economically comfortable. Most Jewish households describe themselves as having enough money to meet their needs, including 50% who say they “have some extra money” (29%) or are “well off” (21%). Yet there are many households with unmet financial needs, including some whose needs preclude their participation in Jewish life.

- Seventy-two percent of Jewish adults in Maine have earned at least a bachelor's degree, including 44% who have obtained a graduate or professional degree.
- Sixty-four percent of Jewish adults in Maine who are not in high school are working either a full-time job (41%), a part-time job (12%), or in multiple positions (11%). Twenty-three percent are retired. Twelve percent are not currently employed or retired, including 3% who are currently looking for work.
- Sixteen percent of Jewish households in Maine either cannot make ends meet (1%) or are just managing to make ends meet (15%).
- Ten percent of Jewish households in Maine said they have household income below \$50,000, while 12% have household income of \$250,000 or more. Twenty-two percent of Jewish households did not provide information about household income. However, these households are likely to be slightly more affluent than the overall Maine Jewish community: in the aggregate, they reported slightly higher standards of living than the households that did answer the income question.
- Forty-six percent of Jewish households in Maine have some form of debt, including student loans (33%), credit card debt (28%), or medical debt (15%).
- In the past year, 22% of Jewish adults in Maine had to limit or change their involvement in Jewish life due to their financial situation.

Educational attainment and employment

The Jewish population of Maine is highly educated. Two thirds of Jewish adults (72%) have earned at least a bachelor's degree, including 44% who have obtained a graduate or professional degree (Table 9.1). Among Jewish adults in the United States, 58% have a bachelor's degree or higher.⁴²

Table 9.1. Educational attainment

	All Jewish adults (%)
	↓
High school diploma (or equivalent) or less	19
Associate or technical degree	9
Bachelor's degree	28
Graduate or professional degree	44
Other	<1
Total	100

Two thirds of Jewish adults in Maine who are not in high school are working either a full-time job (41%), a part-time job (12%), or in multiple positions (11%), while 23% are retired (Table 9.2).⁴³ Despite 12% of Jewish adults not being currently employed or retired, only 3% are looking for work, suggesting that perhaps the remaining 9% are stay-at-home parents, full-time students, on temporary leave, or otherwise not part of the labor force.

Table 9.2. Employment status

	All Jewish adults not in high school (%)
	↓
Working	64
Working full-time in one job	41
Working part-time in one job	12
Working in multiple positions	11
Not working	35
Not working for pay but looking for work	3
Not working for pay and not looking for work	9
On temporary leave	<1
Retired	23
Total	100

Financial situation and income

To assess financial well-being, each survey respondent was asked to provide a subjective assessment of their household's financial situation. One percent of Jewish households in Maine said they cannot make ends meet and another 15% shared that they are just managing to make ends meet (Table 9.3).⁴⁴ These two categories are combined for the purposes of this report into a single category referred to as "struggling" and constitute 16% of Jewish households in Maine. Of the remaining households, 35% said they have enough money, 29% said they have some extra money, and 21% described themselves as well-off.

Table 9.3. Subjective financial situation

Report category	Response option	Jewish households (%)
		↓
Struggling	Cannot make ends meet	1
	Just managing to make ends meet	15
Enough	Have enough money	35
Extra	Have extra money	29
Well-off	Well-off	21
Total		100

The financial situation of Jewish households in Maine varies significantly by Jewish engagement, age, and relationship status. Households in the Immersed group have the largest share of those who are struggling (Table 9.4). Young adults ages 18-39 tend to be struggling significantly more than any other age group. Unmarried households are struggling financially more than households that include a married couple.

Table 9.4. Financial situation

	Struggling (%)	Enough (%)	Extra (%)	Well off (%)	Total (%)
All Jewish households	16	35	29	21	100
Jewish engagement					
Minimally Involved	11	39	34	15	100
Connected	12	34	28	26	100
Affiliated	19	31	27	23	100
Immersed	35	29	21	15	100
Region					
Southern Maine	14	33	30	23	100
Rest of Maine	19	37	27	17	100
Age					
18-39	30	33	27	10	100
40-54	15	35	39	11	100
55-64	13	31	30	27	100
65-74	7	43	23	28	100
75+	18	31	25	26	100
Relationship status					
Inmarried	14	38	23	26	100
Intermarried	14	31	32	22	100
Not married	27	44	20	9	100
Minor child in household					
No	15	36	28	21	100
Yes	20	31	31	18	100

Ten percent of Jewish households in Maine have an income below \$50,000, and 12% have an income of \$250,000 or more (Tables 9.5a and 9.5b). Twenty-two percent of households declined to provide information on their income. However, these households are likely to be slightly more affluent than the overall Maine Jewish community: in the aggregate, they reported slightly higher standards of living than the households that did answer the income question. Age, relationship status, having a minor child in the household, and financial situation are all associated with household income.

Table 9.5a. Household income

	Less than \$50,000 (%)	\$50,000 to \$74,999 (%)	\$75,000 to \$99,999 (%)	\$100,000 to \$149,999 (%)
All Jewish households	10	10	16	15
Jewish engagement				
Minimally Involved	11	9	15	16
Connected	12	6	17	16
Affiliated	6	8	15	15
Immersed	15	21	16	15
Region				
Southern Maine	8	8	15	17
Rest of Maine	13	13	17	13
Age				
18-39	18	17	19	18
40-54	3	4	10	22
55-64	6	6	15	14
65-74	11	12	17	13
75+	15	7	19	10
Relationship status				
Inmarried	13	4	13	16
Intermarried	4	10	16	18
Not married	33	17	19	5
Minor child in household				
No	11	12	17	12
Yes	8	3	13	25
Financial situation				
Struggling	33	25	14	11
Enough	11	10	26	21
Extra	4	7	11	15
Well off	1	2	8	10

Note: This table is split into parts a and b but should be read across rows. If you add all values across the same row in parts a and b, the total is 100%.

Table 9.5b. Household income

	\$150,000 to \$199,999 (%)	\$200,000 to \$249,999 (%)	\$250,000 or more (%)	Don't know/Prefer not to answer (%)
All Jewish households	9	6	12	22
Jewish engagement				
Minimally Involved	10	5	8	26
Connected	11	7	12	19
Affiliated	9	6	18	22
Immersed	8	3	13	10
Region				
Southern Maine	10	8	13	22
Rest of Maine	9	2	10	23
Age				
18-39	13	4	9	2
40-54	11	12	25	13
55-64	14	3	9	32
65-74	3	4	10	30
75+	5	3	3	37
Relationship status				
Inmarried	10	7	15	22
Intermarried	11	6	12	23
Not married	2	1	3	20
Minor child in household				
No	9	5	9	24
Yes	10	7	18	17
Financial situation				
Struggling	2	1	<1	14
Enough	6	3	2	22
Extra	19	10	16	18
Well off	9	9	31	30

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. Using that formula, 2% of Jewish households in Maine are below 100% FPL, 2% are between 100-149% FPL and 7% are between 150-249% FPL (Table 9.6). In all, 10% of Jewish households in Maine are at or below 250% FPL, including 8% of Jewish households in Southern Maine and 12% of Jewish households in the rest of the state.

Table 9.6. Federal poverty level

	All Jewish households (%)	All Jewish households in Southern Maine (%)	All Jewish households in rest of Maine (%)
	↓	↓	↓
Total < 250% FPL	10	8	12
< 100% FPL	2	1	2
100-149% FPL	2	1	3
150-249% FPL	7	6	7

Economic insecurity

Almost half of all Jewish households in Maine have some form of debt (46%), including student loan (33%), credit card (28%), or medical debt (15%; Table 9.7). Because two thirds (65%) of households that include a young adult between the ages of 18-39 have students loans, a higher proportion of young households hold debt than older households. Jewish households in Southern Maine are about half as likely as their counterparts in the rest of the state have medical debt (10% vs. 19%). As might be expected, household debt is inversely related to financial status, with households that are more affluent having less debt across all categories.

Table 9.7. Household debt

	Any debt (%)	Student loan (%)	Credit card (%)	Medical (%)
All Jewish households	46	33	28	15
Jewish engagement				
Minimally Involved	40	29	23	12
Connected	36	27	22	16
Affiliated	54	37	29	17
Immersed	57	45	42	13
Region				
Southern Maine	44	32	22	10
Rest of Maine	51	33	30	19
Age				
18-39	74	65	33	10
40-54	56	44	40	28
55-64	46	34	31	19
65-74	17	7	10	3
75+	28	9	16	8
Relationship status				
Inmarried	47	32	23	19
Intermarried	45	35	29	14
Not married	51	23	32	11
Minor child in household				
No	39	26	24	12
Yes	59	51	28	17
Financial situation				
Struggling	87	59	65	29
Enough	47	36	30	18
Extra	35	26	15	9
Well off	18	16	2	1

For a third of Jewish households in Maine, debt is sometimes (21%), often (8%), or a constant (5%) source of financial stress (Table 9.8). Only 13% of households have debt but say it is not a source of financial stress.

Table 9.8. Debt as financial stress

	All Jewish households (%)
	↓
Debt is not a source of financial stress	13
Debt is sometimes a source of financial stress	21
Debt is often a source of financial stress	8
Debt is a constant source of financial stress	5
No debt	54
Total	100

More than half of non-retired Jewish adults in Maine believe that their retirement plan is on track (55%; Table 9.9). However, 21% of non-retired adults do not see their retirement plan is on track, 12% are uncertain, and 10% do not have a retirement plan. Only 1% of non-retired adults do not plan to retire.

Table 9.9. Retirement on track

	All non-retired adults (%)
	↓
Yes	55
No	21
I don't know	12
I don't have a retirement plan	10
I do not plan to retire	1
Total	100

Of retired Jewish adults in Maine, only 22% feel somewhat (12%) or very confident (10%) in their retirement funds (Table 9.10). Three-quarters of retired adults are not at all (55%) or not too confident (21%) in their savings.

Table 9.10. Confidence in retirement funds

	All retired adults (%)
	↓
Not at all confident	55
Not too confident	21
Somewhat confident	12
Very confident	10
Total	100

Another benchmark commonly used to assess financial vulnerability is the ability to cover emergency expenses. Twenty-one percent of Jewish households in Maine hold insufficient savings to cover three months of expenses and 3% are unable to pay in full an unexpected \$400 emergency expense with cash, money currently in a bank account, or a credit card (Table 9.11).⁴⁵

More than one third of the Immersed group (37%) does not have sufficient savings to cover three months of expenses, significantly more than the other Jewish engagement groups. Larger shares of younger households also have insufficient savings to cover three months of expenses, compared to older households.

Table 9.11. Economic insecurity

	Unable to pay an unexpected \$400 emergency expense (%)	Insufficient savings to cover three months of expenses (%)
All Jewish households	3	21
Jewish engagement		
Minimally Involved	3	17
Connected	3	20
Affiliated	4	11
Immersed	4	37
Region		
Southern Maine	3	15
Rest of Maine	4	25
Age		
18-39	3	35
40-54	3	25
55-64	3	19
65-74	4	6
75+	1	12
Relationship status		
Inmarried	1	22
Intermarried	2	16
Not married	10	28
Minor child in household		
No	3	17
Yes	3	23
Financial situation		
Struggling	14	65
Enough	2	22
Extra	<1	3
Well off	<1	<1

In the past three years, 87% of Jewish households in Maine have not had difficulty paying for basic necessities such as food, housing or medical care (Table 9.12). However, 3% did face one or more of these financial hardships within the past year, 2% both during the past year and also between one to three years ago, and 8% within the past three years but more than a year ago.

Table 9.12. Hardships

	All Jewish households (%)
	↓
No hardship	87
Hardship during the past year	3
Hardship both during past year and between 1-3 years ago	2
Hardship between 1-3 years ago	8
Total	100

Public benefits

Sixteen percent of all Jewish households in Maine receive any public benefit, such as Supplemental Security Income (SSI; 10%); food, housing, or utilities assistance (4%); Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP; 1%), or unemployment benefits (1%; Tables 9.13 and 9.14).⁴⁶

Table 9.13. Public benefits⁴⁷

	All Jewish households (%)
	↓
Supplemental Security Income (SSI), or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) benefits	10
Assistance with food, housing, or utilities (e.g., SNAP, WIC +)	4
Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP)	1
Unemployment benefits	1

Table 9.14. Public benefits

		Receive any public benefit (%)
All Jewish households		16
Jewish engagement		
Minimally Involved		13
Connected		15
Affiliated		18
Immersed		25
Region		
Southern Maine		11
Rest of Maine		18
Age		
18-39		9
40-54		6
55-64		20
65-74		15
75+		23
Relationship status		
Inmarried		23
Intermarried		8
Not married		25
Minor child in household		
No		16
Yes		9
Financial situation		
Struggling		32
Enough		19
Extra		8
Well off		0

Of households that receive public benefits, 62% felt that the assistance they received over the past year was adequate to meet their needs, 26% felt that it was not adequate, and 12% did not need assistance over the past year.

Impact of finances on Jewish life

Finances affect how Jews in Maine participate in the Jewish community. Respondents were asked to indicate any ways in the past year that their financial situation limited their participation in Jewish life. Twenty-two percent of Jewish adults in Maine had to limit or change their involvement in Jewish life due to their financial situation (Table 9.15 and 9.16). In the year prior to the survey, 3% of Jewish adults with children did not enroll their children in Jewish education, Jewish camp, or Israel travel for financial reasons, and 17% required financial assistance to enroll their children.

Fifteen percent of Jewish adults were unable to contribute to Jewish causes as much as desired, 9% required dues relief or financial assistance to maintain synagogue membership, 1% discontinued their membership altogether, and 9% required financial assistance to participate in some activities (6%) or could not participate at all (3%).

Nearly half (45%) of adults in the Immersed group faced at least one financial obstacle to participation in Jewish life in the past year, compared to 11% of the Minimally Involved group. Similarly, 45% of Jewish adults ages 18-39 also had to limit or change their involvement in Jewish life due to their financial situation. Of Jewish adults who are struggling financially, 62% were limited in their participation in Jewish life by one or more of the financial factors assessed.

Table 9.15. Limitations on participation in Jewish life

	All Jewish adults (%)
	↓
Required financial assistance to enroll children in Jewish education, Jewish camp, or activities	17
Unable to contribute to Jewish causes as much as desired	15
Required dues relief or financial assistance to maintain synagogue membership	9
Unable to participate in some Jewish activities	6
Required financial assistance to participate in some Jewish activities	3
Did not enroll children in Jewish education, camp, or activities	3
Discontinued synagogue membership	1

Table 9.16. Limitations on participation in Jewish life

		Any limitation (%)
All Jewish adults		22
Jewish engagement		
Minimally Involved		11
Connected		19
Affiliated		27
Immersed		45
Region		
Southern Maine		18
Rest of Maine		24
Age		
18-39		45
40-54		20
55-64		10
65-74		8
75+		11
Relationship status		
Inmarried		22
Intermarried		18
Not married		28
Minor child in household		
No		16
Yes		24
Financial situation		
Struggling		62
Enough		20
Extra		7
Well off		6

CHAPTER 10. HEALTH NEEDS

Chapter highlights

This chapter focuses on the overall health and health service needs of Jewish adults and households in Maine.

- Sixty-four percent of Jewish adults in Maine describe their physical health as very good (41%) or excellent (23%).
- Fifty-six percent of Jewish adults in Maine describe their mental health as very good (34%) or excellent (22%).
- Twenty-eight percent of Jewish households in Maine include at least one person with a chronic health issue, disability or health need.
- In the past year, 28% of Jewish households in Maine required services to manage health needs. Most of these households were able to obtain the services they required, but 8% felt they did not receive adequate services to manage their issues.
- When assessing their local support networks, 4% of Jewish adults in Maine felt they have no one they can call upon when they need assistance, and 42% can only rely on a few people.
- Twenty-two percent of all Jewish households in Maine manage or provide care to close relatives or friends on a regular basis, aside from routine childcare.

Physical and mental health

Most Jewish adults in Maine are in good mental and physical health (Table 10.1). About two thirds of Jewish adults describe their physical health as “very good” (41%) or “excellent” (23%),⁴⁸ and a similar share describe their mental health as “very good” (34%) or “excellent” (22%). There are, however, 7% of Jewish adults who describe their physical health as “fair” (6%) or “poor” (<1%), and 13% who describe their mental health as “fair” (10%) or “poor” (3%).

Table 10.1. Physical and mental health

All Jewish adults	Physical health (%)	Mental health (%)
Excellent	23	22
Very good	41	34
Good	29	31
Fair	6	10
Poor	<1	3

About one quarter of Jewish adults in Maine ages 18-39 (24%) have fair or poor mental health, more than twice any other age group (Table 10.2). Similarly, households that are struggling financially are significantly more likely than households that are not struggling both to include someone whose physical health is fair or poor and to include someone whose mental health is fair or poor.

Table 10.2. Health is fair or poor

	Physical or mental health (%)	Physical health (%)	Mental health (%)
All Jewish adults	16	7	13
Jewish engagement			
Minimally Involved	9	4	7
Connected	15	5	13
Affiliated	21	11	13
Immersed	25	12	23
Region			
Southern Maine	16	6	12
Rest of Maine	14	8	13
Age			
18-39	26	9	24
40-54	12	2	10
55-64	14	7	8
65-74	8	5	7
75+	14	12	5
Relationship status			
Inmarried	12	6	8
Intermarried	16	6	14
Not married	19	9	15
Minor child in household			
No	16	7	12
Yes	17	5	14
Financial situation			
Struggling	29	16	24
Enough	14	5	11
Extra	10	6	7
Well off	15	4	12

Health and disability

Twenty-eight percent of Jewish households in Maine include at least one person with a chronic health issue, disability, or health need (Table 10.3). The Immersed group has the largest share of households that include at least one person with a health issue (42%).

Table 10.3. Chronic health issue, disability, or health need

All Jewish households (%)	
All Jewish households	28
Jewish engagement	
Minimally Involved	19
Connected	33
Affiliated	28
Immersed	42
Region	
Southern Maine	25
Rest of Maine	32
Age	
18-39	38
40-54	15
55-64	36
65-74	26
75+	30
Relationship status	
Inmarried	32
Intermarried	25
Not married	36
Minor child in household	
No	31
Yes	19

Overall, 24% of Jewish households in Maine include an adult with a health issue, special need, or disability, including 22% of households in Southern Maine and 27% in the rest of the state. Three percent of Jewish households in Maine include a child with a health issue, including 2% of households in Southern Maine and 3% in the rest of the state. In nearly all Jewish households in Maine that include someone with a health issue, special need, or disability (95%), the person with the health issue is an adult; only in 12% of households that include someone with a health issue is the person with that issue a child (Table 10.4). In 5% of households with health issues, special needs, or disabilities, at least one adult and one child each have a health issue.

Table 10.4. Household members affected by a health issue, special need, or disability

	Adults (%)	Children (%)
All households	24	3
Southern Maine	22	2
Rest of Maine	27	3
All households with a disability	95	12
Southern Maine	98	12
Rest of Maine	--	--
All households with children	14	9
Southern Maine	15	7
Rest of Maine	--	--

Chronic illness is the most common limiting health issue in the Maine Jewish community, affecting 18% of all Jewish households, including 63% of Jewish households with any limiting health issue (Table 10.5). Nine percent of all Jewish households in Maine include someone with mental or emotional health issues, including 33% of Jewish households with any limiting health issue. Eight percent of all Jewish households in Maine include someone with a physical disability, including 29% of Jewish households with any limiting health issue.

Table 10.5. Specific health issues

	All Jewish households (%)	Jewish households with a limiting chronic health issue, disability, or special need (%)	All Jewish households in Southern Maine (%)	All Jewish households in Rest of Maine (%)
	↓	↓	↓	↓
Chronic illness	18	63	15	22
Mental or emotional health issues	9	33	8	11
Physical disability	8	29	7	10
Developmental or intellectual disability	7	24	4	10
Dementia	1	4	2	<1
Complications related to COVID-19	2	6	2	1
Lyme Disease	<1	2	1	<1
Substance abuse or addiction	<1	1	<1	<1
Other	3	10	2	4

Support services

Nineteen percent of Jewish households felt they received adequate services to manage their health issues, special needs, or disabilities, including 69% of households with a health issue (Table 10.6). However, 8% of all Jewish households and 29% of Jewish households with a health issue said they did not receive adequate services for managing their health issues.

Table 10.6. Adequacy of health issue services received

	Services were adequate (%)	Services were not adequate (%)	No services needed (%)	No health issue (%)	Total (%)
All Jewish households	19	8	1	72	100
Southern Maine	19	5	1	75	100
Rest of Maine	18	14	<1	68	100
Households with a disability	69	29	2	N/A	100
Southern Maine	77	18	4	N/A	100
Rest of Maine	57	42	1	N/A	100

Respondents who indicated they did not receive adequate services were asked to describe which services were lacking and in what ways. The most common service types to be described as inadequate were services for mental health issues and services for learning and developmental disabilities. Other issues cited included long waitlists for services, staffing shortages at agencies providing services, and lack of specialty services.

Support services and personal network

When assessing their local support networks, 4% of Jewish adults in Maine felt they had no one to rely on and 42% felt they could only rely on a few people (Table 10.7). Older adults are more likely to have few people to rely on, with 58% of adults ages 65-74 and 68% of adults ages 75 or older saying they had just a few people or no one to rely on.

Table 10.7. Personal support network

	A lot of people (%)	A fair number of people (%)	Just a few people (%)	No one (%)	Total (%)
All Jewish adults	20	34	42	4	100
Jewish engagement					
Minimally Involved	19	35	42	4	100
Connected	19	34	43	4	100
Affiliated	24	30	41	5	100
Immersed	18	36	45	1	100
Region					
Southern Maine	18	36	45	2	100
Rest of Maine	22	32	39	6	100
Age					
18-39	28	41	31	<1	100
40-54	32	27	40	2	100
55-64	10	45	39	6	100
65-74	13	28	50	8	100
75+	8	24	63	5	100
Relationship status					
Inmarried	20	39	36	4	100
Intermarried	22	31	44	4	100
Not married	10	34	55	2	100
Minor child in household					
No	16	35	45	5	100
Yes	32	25	42	1	100

Caregiving

Twenty-two percent of all Jewish households in Maine manage or provide care to close relatives or friends on a regular basis, aside from routine childcare (Tables 10.8 and 10.9). Eleven percent of all Jewish households have someone who personally provides care, 4% manage care provided by others, and 7% both manage care and personally provide care.

By region, 17% of households in Southern Maine either manage or provide care, including 8% who personally provide care, 4% who manage care provided by others, and 5% who do both. Thirty percent of households in the rest of the state either manage or provide care, including 17% who personally provide care, 3% who manage care provided by others, and 9% who do both.

Among Jewish households with a health issue, special need, or disability, 47% either manage or provide care for someone, including 38% in Southern Maine and 57% in the rest of the state.

Table 10.8. Manage or provide care to close relatives or friends on a regular basis

	Yes, personally provide care (%)	Yes, both manage care provided by others and provide care (%)	Yes, manage care provided by others (%)	No (%)	Total (%)
All Jewish households	11	7	4	78	100
Southern Maine	8	5	4	83	100
Rest of Maine	17	9	3	70	100
Households with a health issue	28	16	3	53	100
Southern Maine	18	5	4	72	100
Rest of Maine	30	26	1	43	100

Table 10.9. Manage or provide care to close relatives or friends on a regular basis

All Jewish households (%)	
All Jewish households	22
Jewish engagement	
Minimally Involved	17
Connected	28
Affiliated	18
Immersed	35
Region	
Southern Maine	17
Rest of Maine	30
Age	
18-39	27
40-54	26
55-64	28
65-74	16
75+	18
Relationship status	
Inmarried	29
Intermarried	21
Not married	17
Minor child in household	
No	21
Yes	25

In 14% of all Jewish households in Maine, including 66% of households that manage or provide care, a parent or in-law is receiving regular care (Table 10.10). In 4% of all Jewish households in Maine, including 19% of households that manage or provide care, an adult child age 18 or older is receiving regular care. In 3% of all Jewish households in Maine, including 17% of households that manage or provide care, a spouse is receiving regular care. In 3% of all Jewish households in Maine,

including 13% of households that manage or provide care, a child under age 18 with special needs is receiving regular care.

Table 10.10. Person(s) that receive regular care

	All Jewish households (%)	Jewish households that provide or manage care (%)
	↓	↓
A parent or in-law	14	66
Southern Maine	11	67
Rest of Maine	19	--
An adult child age 18 or older	4	19
Southern Maine	1	9
Rest of Maine	8	--
Your spouse	3	17
Southern Maine	1	9
Rest of Maine	7	--
A child under age 18 with special needs	3	13
Southern Maine	3	2
Rest of Maine	4	--
Someone else	1	3
Southern Maine	<1	2
Rest of Maine	1	--

Of Jewish households in Maine that include someone age 55 or older, 11% include someone who requires assistance with daily activities, such as medical appointments, meetings, work, or getting things for daily living.

CHAPTER 11. IN THE WORDS OF COMMUNITY MEMBERS

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

- 1) Based on your own experience, what do you consider to be the strengths and weaknesses of the Maine Jewish community? (925 responses)
- 2) What gives you the most satisfaction, joy, or meaning to your life as a Jewish person in Maine? (924 responses)

The responses to these questions reinforce the themes presented throughout the report and provide further evidence of the community's needs and the opportunities available to it.

This chapter summarizes thematic responses to these two questions and shares a selection of quotes from respondents. For each question, themes that appear in more than 50 responses are summarized. Many respondents touched on multiple themes and may be included in more than one category. Where relevant, respondents' gender, age, and region have been added to provide additional context for the comments; however, in some cases, this additional information is withheld or obscured to protect the anonymity of the respondent. Quotes were selected to represent the diversity of themes across respondents' answers and, where possible, to represent diversity by gender, age, and region.

The numbers in this chapter reflect the number of respondents whose responses to the open-ended questions reflected the themes being addressed. Where possible, to provide a general sense of sentiment within the Maine Jewish community, responses are coded to assess whether respondents' views are positive or negative. If a response included both positive and negative elements, it is counted in both categories. Unlike in previous chapters, the responses are not weighted to be representative of the full Jewish community. Some quotations have been edited for clarity or to preserve the anonymity of the respondent.

Strengths and weaknesses

Community size

The Jewish community of Maine includes 10,600 Jewish households and 19,100 Jewish individuals, along with 9,000 non-Jewish individuals—spouses, children, roommates, and others. The population is highly concentrated in and around Portland, and there are smaller pockets of concentration in cities around the state. However, the population is fairly sparse in the rest of the state, and many Jews in Maine live a long drive away from the nearest Jewish organization. Overall, 233 respondents commented on the size of the Maine Jewish community, including 143 who considered its relatively small size a weakness and 54 who cited it as a great strength. For those who consider community size a weakness, the key issues are that the size of the community translates to a lack of resources,

difficulty accessing Jewish spaces, and challenges in building a sense of collective identity. For respondents who consider the Maine Jewish community's small size a strength, being a small community contributes to a sense of cohesiveness and shared history, and drives their creativity and resourcefulness to meet community members' needs even without the amenities available in larger Jewish communities.

Wish there were more of us...distance and travel make participation a challenge. – female, 75, Southern Maine

Love the small Jewish community. We come together and support each other when needed. – female, 54, Southern Maine

Weakness is that people are very spread out, and there are few Jews in each community. Strength is that people make the effort to come together for special events. – female, 60, Rest of Maine

We need more Jews. We need small groups (chavurot) in rural areas where we have too few Jews to form a congregation, and synagogues are in cities that are not nearby. I wish it were easier to find kosher meat and poultry (Trader Joe's is my only source). We live in a rural area because this is where we can best afford to live. I wish it were easier to feel connected to other Jews here in Maine. – male, 65, Southern Maine

Weakness is that there just aren't a lot of Jews in Maine. Its strength I would say is because we are the "others" here, we pull together and recognize and support one another. We used to live in [redacted] where there is an enormous Jewish population, and upon moving here, my family, especially my children, recognized what it meant to be a minority for the first time in their lives. There's sort of a special recognition among Jews in Maine that I didn't experience in [redacted; the other Jewish community]. – female, 48, Southern Maine

We have a tight and welcoming community—small, but sufficient. It is able to educate our children in Jewish learning. – male, 62, Rest of Maine

We are small but mighty. People know each other and their histories. I work at [redacted; a Jewish organization] and have seen the positives and negatives to this. – male, Southern Maine

Very small, hard to tap into for newcomers to Maine. – female, 37, Southern Maine

Though small, the community is tightly knit...Despite the warm embrace of those in the community, distance can be a problem. Our closest Jewish friends live more than 45 minutes away, making regular meet-ups inconvenient. – male, 41, Rest of Maine

There are very few Jews in Maine, which is a very rural state. Consequently, most of the Jews live in urban areas and their synagogues are fairly close to where they live. For those of us who live in rural areas, there are fewer Jews, and activities are limited to services at home. This is a definite disadvantage, and I feel disconnected from Judaism. – male, 68, Rest of Maine

Communal unity and cohesion

One hundred seventy-seven respondents commented on communal unity and cohesion as either a strength or a weakness of the Maine Jewish community. Of these, 105 wrote positive comments, describing the community's tight-knit and welcoming nature as a great strength. Sixty-three respondents commented negatively, expressing feelings that the community was not united, that its

organizations struggled to work together, or that the community was not as welcoming as it could be.

We are fairly close, and I appreciate that many of us know each other well and have been here a long time—and I think we're welcoming to new folks. I think there are many Maine Jews who feel strongly and care a lot about our people and our community, and it shows and means a lot. — female, 31, Southern Maine

We are active in various communities. We support each other. We bring meals to people in need. — female, 71, Southern Maine

Strengths: Welcoming and accepting, intentionally diverse. Weaknesses: Could be more collaborative and proactive. — male, 47, Southern Maine

Some wonderful people and very talented spiritual leaders. The congregations work well together. — female, 72, Rest of Maine

Strength: Residents already have strong feelings of connection to one another living in the state of Maine, and building Jewish community upon this foundation is having success. — male, 55, Rest of Maine

There seems to be a natural affinity among Jews in Maine because there are not many of us. We tend to enjoy discovering our mutual background. — female, 75, Rest of Maine

The Maine Jewish community is very fractured. There aren't that many Jews, but there are a ton of synagogues, the JCA, Center for Small Town Jewish Life, JAM/JVP. They often have event conflicts and don't coordinate to make all Jews feel connected and safe. — female, 34, Southern Maine

While there are a number of Jews living in Maine, there is no community feel. Some is based on physical distance, but it seems more to do with the lack of cohesiveness of the few synagogues, especially in Southern Maine, and the unwillingness of synagogue leaders to put past differences aside and promote unity rather than division. — male, 52, Southern Maine

We're small and we were tight until October 7. Now we are divided, if not shattered. — female, 39, Southern Maine

Weakness: The community overall seems somewhat closed and unwelcoming and stratified by denomination. — male, 62, Southern Maine

The community gets much stronger and much more united as you exit Southern Maine. Chabad does an incredible job of connecting Jewish people to the religion, holidays, and Israel. The congregations in Augusta and Waterville have been leaders for Israelis in the state. — female, 40, Rest of Maine

Synagogues

One hundred sixty-eight respondents discussed synagogues as sources of strength or weakness in the Maine Jewish community. Of these, there was a nearly even balance of positive and negative comments, with 76 respondents writing something positive and 78 writing something negative. There are many respondents who are enthusiastic about the congregations where they are current or past members. However, there are also many members of the Maine Jewish community who find

the congregations unwelcoming, unable to meet the needs of newcomers, unengaging, or too remote to permit frequent participation.

The choices of synagogues aren't great—there is a Conservative temple that has very long services that most people I know don't want to go to. The Reform temple...has a mediocre rabbi that we didn't click with. – male, Southern Maine

We are too far-flung; we live far from a synagogue. – female, 77, Rest of Maine

We have a vibrant Reform congregation and an excellent rabbi. The Conservative congregation...has an aging population and is struggling for members. – male, 74, Rest of Maine

We are in a "mixed" marriage. In spite of my Gentile wife's efforts to contribute to synagogue life, there was not the feeling of inclusiveness that I wanted. We didn't feel supported by the rabbi at the time and stopped our Jewish children's religious education short of bar/bat mitzvah. Not necessarily a strength/weakness of the community, but our interpretation of attitudes. – male, 76, Southern Maine

The synagogue in my community no longer met my needs. I tried out three other synagogues, but they were all 45 minutes from my home and, in winter, that is tough. Also, in most cases, the services are too lengthy, and I can't sit still for that long. Another thing is that sometimes the Torah study and services are just plain boring—they don't engage my mind or soul. I'm really searching for a connection, but I haven't found one yet. – female, 70, Rest of Maine

Feels like there are too many synagogues that are turf-y with each other—[redacted; two specific congregations]—should combine programming more often. Rabbis are ok...see opportunity there given turnover and sabbaticals. – female, 35, Southern Maine

In Portland, it felt more like people recreating what they knew from places farther south with larger Jewish populations. On the one hand, that is the very definition of tradition, but it didn't feel very accessible to me. If you didn't know the script from it being intuitive memory from your own childhood, it was hard to feel a sense of belonging. In small town rural Maine, however, the distances are too great to keep up with synagogue life or Hebrew school with our children as much as we would have wanted. We go when we can, but we would go more if we lived closer, and we have just come to accept that Hebrew school is not practical for us logistically. – male, 49, Rest of Maine

Geography

One hundred fifty-three respondents commented on the geography of the Maine Jewish community. Six described it as a strength of the community, and 138 identified it as a significant weakness. The chief complaint is that because so many members of the Jewish community live far from Jewish institutions, it is difficult to create community, develop a sense of connection, or participate in programs and activities.

Maine has a strong Jewish community for a state of its size and rural character. I believe this is mainly due to Maine's proximity to the Greater Boston-Hartford-New York corridor, which has a high concentration of Jews, and Maine's popularity as a vacation destination for many Northeasterners, including Jews. – male, 31, Rest of Maine

Because we are so spread out, we are actually closer. – female, 68, Rest of Maine

Because of the rurality of the area we live, it is difficult to find a synagogue within less than 30 minutes from [our home]. There are very few young Jews; growing up, I did not know anyone my age who was Jewish besides my family. There are few observant and religious Jews. – female, 19, Rest of Maine

Weakness is the huge spread, the small amount of Jews per square mile in Maine, the low density of Jews in Maine, especially outside of cities. It's hard to feel connected. – female, 24, Southern Maine

Out here in the boonies, there is a surprising number of Jews, but other than annual seders (which fell into disarray during the pandemic), there is no organization. We live in the boonies for a reason! – female, 68, Southern Maine

Sometimes Jewish life here feels very spread out. Towns like [redacted, in Southern Maine] feel very far from Jewish life—I wish I had the time to create community closer to me. Or that it already existed. I think I'd show up to functions if they didn't always involve getting on the highway. Part of that is on me for choosing to live in a town that I knew was farther from Jewish life. – male, 41, Southern Maine

Programming

Eighty-eight respondents commented on the programs, events, and activities offered by the Maine Jewish community, with 41 respondents citing some programming as one of the community's strengths and 46 citing programming as a key weakness. Respondents who commented positively on communal programming found activities that interested them and in which they could participate with peers of similar age and life stage. By contrast, respondents who felt programming was a communal weakness tended to feel that they were missing specific activities or a peer group with whom to participate. Several noted the challenges of accessing activities that are hosted far from where they live, and a few noted they had more options in much larger Jewish communities where they had resided in the past.

There are not enough opportunities specifically geared to getting new people involved. – female, 60, Rest of Maine

Lack of participation by young members in organized activities. – male, 70, Rest of Maine

I would like my children to be able to participate in a fun, teenage, Jewish youth club, and these seem not to exist. – female, 45, Southern Maine

There is no beautiful music. No options for Reform Jews. No education for Reform kids and only an expensive program that is a bit...dull. – female, 46, Southern Maine

There is a vibrant and amazing network of active anti/non-Zionist Jews. We are organizing regular cultural, spiritual, political, and social events. I imagine we have easily 50-100 active participants organically, without direct recruitment. Many people are active 1-6x per month. – female, 35, Southern Maine

There are so many opinions of what events, celebrations, speakers, etc., should be available, but it's historically been hard to find volunteers to take on a leadership role to make these things happen. – female, 43, Southern Maine

Strength: The various temples in Portland and the JCC programs throughout the year. – male, 80, Southern Maine

The ruach, spirit of the community, is welcoming and enthusiastic. There is a wide range of activities, and I see the different aspects of the community to be both serious and joyful. – female, 83, Southern Maine

Strength: Statewide programs, especially those convened by the Center for Small Town Jewish Life. – female, 62, Rest of Maine

Events hosted by organizations are geared toward retirees, families with kids, or young Zionist professionals. I don't fit into any of those categories. The other grassroots events seem to all be about Israel/Palestine, which I absolutely get, but my head and heart can only take so much. – female, 31, Southern Maine

Many of the events I've attended have been predominantly older (GenX/Boomer) age demographic. Maine naturally sways in this direction demographically, but it's hard to connect with other Jewish folks when there aren't a lot of people my age attending events. – male, 26, Southern Maine

Strengths: Active, visible, an increasing number of programs through the JCA and Portland synagogues, Maine Jewish Film Festival, the JCA's commitment to working with refugees and asylum seekers, Maine Jewish Museum art exhibits and cultural performances. – female, 72, Southern Maine

Religious leaders

Eighty-eight respondents wrote about religious leaders, including 59 who cited them as a great strength of the Maine Jewish community and 22 who felt they were a weakness. Those who appreciate the clergy find them inspiring and deeply committed to the well-being of the Jewish community, while those who find the clergy lacking in some way either clash with them on a personal level or believe that their skills are insufficient to lead the community.

Passion and commitment of Maine clergy. – female, 71, Southern Maine

The [redacted city] Jewish community is strong due to its diversity and the leadership of an extraordinary rabbi. – male, 80, Rest of Maine

Lack of talented, dynamic rabbinic leadership. – female, 59, Southern Maine

We have a great rabbi. She relates to young and old alike. – female, 86, Southern Maine

We have an amazing group of attentive, learned rabbis in Maine, and some wonderful synagogues. – female, 60, Rest of Maine

The leaders and rabbis are stellar! – female, 78, Southern Maine

We joined a synagogue, and it took the welcoming committee three months to contact us. The rabbi NEVER called us. – male, Rest of Maine

I think the clergy are good people but lack leadership skills to take the congregations to the next level. The boards are unsophisticated and unable to lead. – female, 49, Southern Maine

The greatest weakness is the ego of most of the rabbis I've met. – male, 57, Southern Maine

Israel

Seventy-seven respondents commented on the Maine Jewish community's positions on Israel or the quality of discourse about Israel within the community. Sixty-eight comments coded negatively, compared to seven that coded positively. The comments reflect a divide in the Maine Jewish community between Zionists and anti-Zionists, as well as discomfort more generally with discourse about Israel, Palestine, and the aftermath of October 7.

The community comes together when there are deaths, tragedies, world issues—especially involving anything related to Israel, antisemitism, and other Jewish-related topics. – female, 73, Southern Maine

Strengths: enthusiasm, willingness to donate time and energy, support for Israel. – male, 82, Rest of Maine

Strengths: strongly Zionist, politically liberal, empathetic. – male, 73, Southern Maine

Strong community working to build strong Jewish cultural, religious, and political community beyond/without Zionism. – female, Southern Maine

Weaknesses: Failure to lead in public discussion about positive aspects about Israel. I believe that the leadership of the Jewish community is not in agreement with the policies of the [Israeli] government, which leads to a vacuum in discourse about Israeli society. Strengths: The Jewish community leadership exists and is effective accepting public discourse about Israel. The emphasis is on the absence of leadership in public discourse (such as a speakers' bureau). – male, 86, Southern Maine

Wonderful people, but like everywhere, we don't fully have the real information about Israel's policies toward Palestine and Palestinians and have been systematically educated with pro-Israel propaganda. That is painful to witness. – female, 44, Rest of Maine

Weakness is that they don't fully support Israel. – female, 58, Southern Maine

Too conservative politically, too unthinkingly pro-Israel. – male, 82, Southern Maine

There's a lack of overall leadership when it comes to issues around Israel. – female, 43, Southern Maine

I am disappointed in the lack of outward support for Israel since October 7 in the Maine Jewish community. No attendance at rallies, very few public statements, very little reaction to those who criticize Israel. It has made me wonder who our allies are and why people are not speaking out. – female, 76, Southern Maine

Weakness: Not being able to hold space for both Israeli and Palestinian grief, such that there are limited dialogue and polarized groups where it doesn't feel welcoming to bring up feeling Y when you are in place X and vice versa. This has been the largest impediment to my participation in organized Jewish life this year. If you feel both, you don't belong anywhere. – female, 24, Southern Maine

JCA

Seventy-two respondents discussed the JCA, with 40 describing it as a strength of the community and 29 describing it as a weakness or lacking in some way. (Respondents in this section are all from Southern Maine.) In general, respondents are pleased with the diversity of programs offered by the

JCA, with options for people of all ages, interests, and backgrounds. There are, however, some complaints stemming from respondents' disagreement with the JCA's approach to public discourse on Israel and its leadership on antisemitism in public schools and local governments.

I would like to have more adult, non-religious programming at JCA. It seemed there were more options pre-pandemic.
— female, 65

Strength: Having the JCA as a community center for culturally Jewish people or non-religious Jews. — female, 34

We [redacted; are relative newcomers to the community] but quickly felt part of the Jewish community through the JCA. — female, 71

JCA is an excellent, well-managed resource. — male, 58

The JCA seems to be growing and offering more and diverse programming... I think the synagogues and JCA have been working to make things accessible to people. — female, 69

The JCA hasn't found a way to be the neutral ground and the place of unity. — female, 50

The JCA and day camp not being led by Jewish professionals creates a lot of challenges, as they neither understand our culture nor our faith. Their affiliation with the Jewish Federations of North America creates additional challenges because the fundraising process and imperatives from the national organization don't work in this community, and so all non-synagogue programs are overpriced, lack financial inclusion, and because the staff isn't Jewish, create a disconnect between the community values, Jewish values, and the organizations. — female, 55

JCA activities range from physical health to intellectual inquiry to popular culture studies to fun with music, dance, and celebration. — female, 73

Severely lacking local community support tackling antisemitism and anti-Israel rhetoric in our public schools and local towns this year. Where are our local Jewish leaders on this? When I compare to Jewish Federation or Jewish Community Center events and vocal support I follow in other states such as New Hampshire and Massachusetts, it's extremely disappointing here in Maine. We feel like we are being left on our own to figure out how to deal with damaging levels of bias in our school system that have been traumatizing our [redacted; age] child. It is to the point that we have considered moving out of Maine. — female, 45

Outreach

Sixty-one respondents commented on Jewish organizations' outreach efforts, including 15 who described these efforts as one of the Maine Jewish community's great strengths and 46 who described them as a weakness. The positive comments praise organizations for their efforts to reach out to everyone in the Jewish community. The negative comments are more varied but tend to lament the organizations' inability to reach everyone, the lack of resources necessary to develop new efforts to reach populations that are not already active, a focus on neighbors of the Jewish community rather than Jewish households, or boards or communal leaders who are unwilling to do what respondents think is necessary to reach out to underserved populations.

Synagogues do a lot of outreach and try to encourage participation. — male, Rest of Maine

Inclusive, diverse, caring. Reaches in and out. – female, 48, Rest of Maine

Would love more outreach toward young adults in their 20s and 30s that isn't geared toward young couples raising children. – female, 32, Southern Maine

There are not enough opportunities specifically geared toward getting new people involved. – female, 60, Rest of Maine

They only service those in the area. No one has ever come to my immediate area. No one has ever really cared that I'm here, I'm by myself. They don't have an outreach program. – female, 70, Rest of Maine

There are so few of us. Some of us are too far from Portland and Colby (College). Synagogues do not do outreach, probably because there is no way to identify us. – female, 69, Rest of Maine

There is an opportunity to expand reach throughout Maine for unaffiliated Jews to connect via online efforts. – male, 71, Rest of Maine

Maine Jews tend to be too focused on their community's past to move on and try to develop anything new. When I was [redacted; involved in a particular Jewish organization], all attempts at reaching out to newcomers to the state or to young people were shot down by a board that was only interested in preserving memories of the past. – male, 50, Southern Maine

Communications

Fifty-five respondents wrote about how Jewish organizations—or informal, grassroots networks—in Maine communicate with each other and with members of the Maine Jewish community. Twenty-one respondents believed that the organizations' communications are a strength of the Jewish community, while 32 believed that they left something to be desired. In general, where communications were described as a weakness, it was primarily a matter of organizations not coordinating calendars.

There is a lack of communication between the synagogues and the JCC. There should be items shared in all newsletters about the other synagogues' and JCC's activities. – age 64, Rest of Maine

The various agencies don't communicate well with each other. It can be hard for a community member to know who is hosting what and when. – female, 43, Southern Maine

The synagogues interact and celebrate together, share invitations to events, and cooperate in all ways. – female, 83, Rest of Maine

The strengths are the informal networks and email lists maintained by young lefty Jews (in the Portland area). – female, 24, Southern Maine

Weakness: Within Portland, lack of communication between the city government and the Jewish community. – female, 34, Southern Maine

Limited weakness may include booking events on top of each other. We need a better community calendar for reference. – female, 61, Southern Maine

If you are not a member of the JCA, it feels challenging to engage in Jewish community activities due to lack of awareness and feelings that “I don’t know anyone and don’t belong.” – female, 60, Southern Maine

Religious life and religious observance

Fifty-two respondents wrote about religious life or religious observance in the Maine Jewish community, including 14 who mentioned this category as one of the community’s great strengths and 33 who felt it was more of a challenge. Many of the quotes appear to be two sides of the same coin—some members of the Maine Jewish community expressed pride in their ability to build a strong Jewish religious community despite their lack of numbers, while others lamented that their lack of numbers makes it challenging to ensure the survival of the religious community in the long-term and difficult to obtain needed goods and services such as kosher food.

Not enough interest in religious services, ritual observances, kasbrut, Jewish learning, etc. – male, 66, Rest of Maine

People who follow religion have access to many resources. – female, 85, Southern Maine

Strength: Some committed people who wish to maintain a Jewish identity and Jewish traditions. – male, 69, Rest of Maine

Weakness: The challenge of living an authentically Jewish life, like keeping kosher, even in the most populated locations in Maine. – male, 55, Rest of Maine

Strength: Members of mixed couples have done a great job of being sensitive to others, yet maintaining meaningful Jewish lives for themselves, their families, and their friends. – female, 74, Southern Maine

Weakness: I think it would be hard to be a very religious young person. – male, 28, Southern Maine

I don’t find the High Holiday services [at my synagogue] particularly inspiring and don’t feel it “speaks” to me. – female, 72, Southern Maine

Weakness: Reliance on religious observance as evidence of Jewishness. – male, 81, Southern Maine

Satisfaction, joy, or meaning in Jewish life

Jewish community

One hundred seventy-nine respondents indicated that being part of the Jewish community gives them the greatest satisfaction, joy, or meaning as a Jewish person in Maine. For some respondents, this meant that the Jewish community became like an extended family. For others, it was a matter of celebrating holidays, life cycle events, Shabbat, or other Jewish activities with their family. Several respondents commented on the relative sparsity of the Jewish population in Maine making time spent with other Jews feel more special.

A sense of strong community that feels like family. – female, 18-39, Rest of Maine

Finding beautiful like-minded community that cares about the same political issues as me, community care, Jewish ritual, and learning. – female, 18-39, Southern Maine

Knowing there are others here, and we have a community. We have great group of moms and kids supporting each other with b'nai mitzvah planning and stuff, so it's really nice. – female, 42, Southern Maine

All the wonderful people in my past that brought me up and lifted me up in the local Jewish community. Also, my late [spouse's] family. – female, 69, Southern Maine

Anti-Zionist Jewish community in Maine! – female, Southern Maine

Being a part of a resilient community that puts being human first. – female, 37, Rest of Maine

Being able to raise my children in a welcoming community where they got a strong moral Jewish foundation that has a strong social action/tikkun olam⁴⁹ theme. – female, 58, Southern Maine

Belonging to an active, diverse community of Jews in a relatively rural state. Those whose families have lived here for a long time and people from away are relatively united into one community that is stronger than its size. – male, 63, Southern Maine

Gathering in community with other Jews to celebrate the cultural, spiritual and ethical bonds that define us as one people. – female, 65, Southern Maine

I enjoy being surrounded by a Jewish community. When I lived [somewhere else], I never felt part of the limited Jewish community—that has not been true in Maine. I have felt welcomed and valued. – female, 72, Southern Maine

I get the most joy from being in Jewish spaces and sharing Jewish life with other Jews in Maine. I so rarely spend time with Jews, so it feels like a special treat to participate in Jewish community when I can. – female, 18-39, Rest of Maine

Family

One hundred fifty-five respondents indicated that they found their greatest satisfaction, joy, or meaning to their life as a Jewish person in Maine with their family. Several answered the question with a single word: “Family.” Respondents wrote about observing holidays, passing on traditions to their children and grandchildren and connecting them to a wider Jewish community, celebrating life-cycle events, and supporting each other in times of trouble.

Engaging in Jewish activities with my family, not only in our home but also in the context of our synagogue and the Center for Small Town Jewish Life. – male, 40-54, Southern Maine

Gatherings of families over food and conversation with a Jewish twist. – female, 71, Southern Maine

My deep Maine roots ([redacted; many] generations!) overlap and blend beautifully with Maine Jewish culture and history. I'm proud to be raising Jewish kids in Maine where we feel safe, loved, and welcome. I'll never leave. – female, Rest of Maine

Proudly being myself, carrying on my family traditions, and teaching my children about the values through holidays and Jewish texts. – female, Southern Maine

Raising and connecting my children to a Jewish community in our city and beyond. – female, 18-39, Southern Maine

The support and celebration of life-cycle events, our family, and others. Wonderful support and caring when my [spouse] died. – female, 75, Rest of Maine

Friends

One hundred twelve respondents said friends gave them their greatest satisfaction, joy, or meaning to their lives as Jewish people in Maine. Much like the respondents who wrote about the importance of family, those who wrote about friends enjoy observing Shabbat and holidays, participating in programs, celebrating together in good times, and supporting each other in trying times. In some cases, sharing Jewish traditions with non-Jewish friends is what provides the most satisfaction, joy, or meaning to respondents' lives as Jewish people in Maine.

The opportunity to stay in touch with long-distance Jewish friends in creative ways, such as having a video call chevrotah or joining online Jewish communities. – female, 18-39, Rest of Maine

Seeing long-time friends at events and services. – female, 86, Southern Maine

Coming together with my Jewish friends to celebrate Passover, or other holidays and milestones. Expressing Jewish joy together and feeling at home with others who have similar values and cultural touchstones. – female, 18-39, Southern Maine

Expressing our thoughts, ideas, and dreams to one another and to a few Jewish friends. We enjoy inviting friends over for Shabbat dinner from time to time, celebrating Jewish holidays with a handful of Jewish friends, reading books by Jewish authors or about Jewish-related topics, cooking a wide assortment of Jewish foods, communicating with family and friends elsewhere, including in Israel. – female, 70, Rest of Maine

I love teaching my non-Jewish Maine friends Yiddish words and introducing them to Jewish cuisine (they love my matzo ball soup!). – male, 67, Rest of Maine

Sharing holidays and cultural events with friends in the absence of local family or with family when they are here. – female, 70, Southern Maine

Congregational life

One hundred nine respondents described congregational life as the source of their greatest satisfaction, joy, or meaning to their lives as Jewish people in Maine. In some cases, belonging to a synagogue or temple provided the community the respondents were seeking. In others, it provided a religious or spiritual outlet they needed. Some spoke about carrying on the traditions of their families who have belonged to the same congregations for generations, or their hope that their children will carry on their traditions after them.

Taking part in services and my synagogues here and in [redacted; the other community where the respondent used to live]. – male, 74, Southern Maine

Coming together as a community in the synagogue and making a minyan. – male, 66, Rest of Maine

Nature and shul ♡ – female, 61, Rest of Maine

The values instilled in me from attending synagogue as a child thru my bar mitzvah, be they from being brought up Jewish or the personality and candor of my cantor, have stayed with me for my entire life! – male, 72, Rest of Maine

Assisting in the renovation and revitalization of our synagogue. – male, 55+, Rest of Maine

Being a board member of a synagogue that [redacted; has played a significant role in the respondent's life]. – female, 40-54, Southern Maine

Knowing the members of my congregation like being there, like being together, and want to volunteer and work together. Another thing that gives me great satisfaction is singing together. Seeing young people attend services when they do. – female, 60, Rest of Maine

Jewish culture

Ninety-seven respondents cited Jewish culture as the source of their greatest satisfaction, joy, or meaning in their lives as Jewish people. Many of these comments described Jewish culture generically, but some specified opportunities to expose non-Jewish friends to Jewish culture, reading Jewish literature, listening to Jewish music, eating Jewish foods, and other means of engaging in Jewish cultural life.

In general, I get a lot of satisfaction and joy as a Jewish person when I host ritual and community-building events centered on Jewish holidays and Jewish culture for a combination of Jews and non-Jews. I feel loved and seen when I can bring together a group of people, including many who have never participated in Jewish traditions and may not have known many Jews, to experience the joy and meaning behind Jewish rituals that are important to me. There are a lot of opportunities for this here in Maine since many non-Jews have very little experience around Jews (as opposed to [redacted], where I grew up). – female, 18-39, Rest of Maine

All of the cultural opportunities in the Midcoast, not necessarily Jewish. Art, music, etc. and the beauty of the area. Many local Jews are involved in these activities and programs. – female, 55+, Rest of Maine

I think it's the moments of folks connecting in person over food, culture, and traditions, and the modes of asking and reflecting on big questions that is most satisfying, joyful, and meaningful. – male, 18-39, Southern Maine

Celebrating cultural aspects of Jewish life in the home. – male, 76, Southern Maine

I am fairly new to Maine, and I am happy that there is a vibrant Jewish cultural scene in the Portland area. – female, 73, Southern Maine

I am mostly interested in intellectual and cultural experiences and discussions that are not religious in nature, but where I feel a kinship with members of the Jewish community. – female, 66, Southern Maine

I love living in Maine—the access to the outdoors and culture has brought me a lifetime of joy and meaning. For a rural place, there are great Jewish programs and offerings across our state. – female, 65, Rest of Maine

Jewish films, books. – female, 74, Southern Maine

Klezmer music. – male, 73, Southern Maine

Cooking Jewish foods. – female, 69, Rest of Maine

Connecting to Jewish people

Ninety-four respondents find their greatest satisfaction, joy, or meaning in their lives as Jewish people in Maine in their connections to other Jews, but not necessarily in a shared, formal, local community setting. For some, this means participating with Jewish organizations online, including synagogues outside the state. For others, it is a matter of a feeling that they share a common identity with their fellow Jews that sets them apart from their neighbors. Most commonly, respondents wrote about the importance of finding fellow Jews who share their interests, values, ethics, or way of practicing Judaism, with or without the assistance or services of synagogues or other Jewish organizations.

Being able to participate online in so many ways. In addition to zoom events at [redacted; Maine synagogues], I also participate in many events and classes offered by Central Synagogue in New York City...But none of that would have been possible even five years ago, so I am very grateful that so many places have reached out to people who live at a distance. – female, 55+, Rest of Maine

Being with other Jews, feeling connected and valued. Being different! – female, 47, Southern Maine

Connecting with other Jews who are thoughtful, intellectual, and committed to leading ethical lives rooted in their Jewish values outside mainstream organizations. – female, 18-39, Southern Maine

Having other Jewish people to socialize with if one chooses. – female, 73, Southern Maine

The grassroots Jewish community and organizing world I am a part of. And knowing that there are community elders who I've known for ages around who I love and care about and who love and care about me. – female, 18-39, Southern Maine

Connecting to a sense of being Jewish

For 81 respondents, simply feeling a sense of being Jewish is the source of their greatest satisfaction, joy, or meaning in their lives as Jewish people in Maine. For many of these respondents, their location in Maine is not a key factor; they believe they would find equal satisfaction, joy, and meaning as Jews no matter where they lived. What matters is finding a way to connect to Jews and/or Judaism.

Clearly identifying as Jewish but secular and non-practicing, my only practices—Shabbat, seder, and some cooking at home, that’s what gives meaning to my heritage. – male, Southern Maine

Embracing the joy of being a Jew. – female, 72, Southern Maine

Feeling at home in Judaism. It would have been the same anywhere. I have lived in too many places to connect my religious life to any one place. – female, 83, Rest of Maine

Feeling pride in being part of a highly accomplished community that has survived centuries of persecution. – male, 70, Southern Maine

I think Judaism gives me a container for my identity. I know where I come from and who I am in the world. – female, 40, Southern Maine

Showing my Jewish and pro-Israel pride! – male, 29, Southern Maine

Pride in the intellectual, scientific, and moral contributions of the Jewish people to our society—this does not include the current Israeli governmental policies in the conduct of the current Middle East conflict. – male, 80, Rest of Maine

Jewish programs and organizations

Seventy-nine respondents find the greatest satisfaction, joy, or meaning in their lives as Jewish people in Maine from Jewish programs and organizations. The specific programs and organizations in which respondents find satisfaction, joy, or meaning vary widely.

Participating in services and activities at my temple and with the Center for Small Town Jewish Life. – female, 56, Rest of Maine

Participating...with the Maine Jewish Museum. – male, 75, Rest of Maine

Programs for my child and seeing [my child’s] Jewish life grow; opportunities for social justice work and to see the social justice values my synagogue and community are standing behind. – male, 44, Southern Maine

The creation of a Jewish Voice for Peace chapter has been one of the most grounding experiences of my life. Being able to gather with other Jews to process the horrors of this moment in history has restored my faith in the moral strength of our culture and religion. – male, 18-39, Rest of Maine

The meetings, the services, and other Hillel-sponsored activities that I regularly attend at [college]! – male, Southern Maine

Working to make the JCA and [congregation] the best they can be, has given me a great deal of satisfaction. Seeing my kids enjoy Hebrew school has brought me much joy. – female, 44, Southern Maine

The Maine Jewish Film Festival is great. – female, 80, Southern Maine

Jewish holidays

For 66 respondents, Jewish holidays are the greatest source of their satisfaction, joy, or meaning in their lives as Jewish people in Maine. To these respondents, observing Jewish holidays helps them build community, both with their fellow Jews and with their non-Jewish neighbors, and provides opportunities to remember their past and pass on their traditions to the next generation.

I like to participate in joyful celebrations of Jewish life—public Hanukkah candle lightings, challah baking sessions at JCA, book groups and author talks, seders with friends. – female, 68, Southern Maine

We are surrounded by lovely non-Jewish neighbors who attend our sukkah or invite them for Hanukkah and Pesach. – female, 52, Southern Maine

Traditions around holidays and Shabbat. – male, Southern Maine

Participating in Jewish holidays with the grandkids. – male, 74, Rest of Maine

Helping others

Fifty-seven respondents find the greatest satisfaction, joy, or meaning in their lives as Jewish people in Maine by participating in activities that help others and/or build a better world. This can take many forms, such as political activism, charitable donations, providing services in helping professions, volunteering, and finding other ways to help people in need.

Praying with my feet, doing political organizing through a Jewish lens with other Jews and using ritual as a tactic of activism. – female, 18-39, Southern Maine

Ability to contribute financially to organizations that promote causes which are important to me. – male, 63, Southern Maine

Able to follow my own relationship with my heritage and my spirituality in beautiful rural Maine, and my health profession being of assistance to others. – female, 55+, Southern Maine

Volunteering with the JCA. – female, 54, Southern Maine

Feeling that I am participating in tikkun olam, and empowered that I am able to learn the needs of our most vulnerable community members and how to locate resources to help meet their and their families' needs...Feeling that I can make a difference, and I have the abilities to be a part of the change the world is seeking by actively participating and not being told to wait, be good, and expect someone to save me. Feeling responsible for taking an active role as a part of a bigger cause that will bring the change humanity seeks to the world. – female, 18-39, Rest of Maine

Jewish history

Fifty-five respondents find their greatest satisfaction, joy, or meaning in their lives as Jewish people in Maine in studying or relating to Jewish history. These comments focused on the general history of the Jewish people, their connection to Israel, their experiences of antisemitism, or their role in the history of Maine.

Our local library holds a lot of local Jewish written or pictorial content. Documenting Maine Jewry has been a fantastic online repository for all things Jewish, too. – female, 55+, Rest of Maine

As a new Jewish person in Maine, I am finding a lot of meaning in being part of a smaller, less thought-of community, and learning about those who were here before me. – male, 18-39, Rest of Maine

I feel culturally Jewish, and my father was an immigrant from [Europe] and had to leave due to Hitler. Remembering this and how quickly things like this can happen gives meaning and motivation to my life. – female, Southern Maine

I have always been proud of my Jewish heritage as that is how I was brought up. I had a [relative] who was a Zionist who was involved in the establishment of making Israel a Jewish state. I also see much that has been happening to turn people away to what is happening now and in the past that needs change. – female, 83, Southern Maine

The recognition of family history in Maine has been important to me. – male, 81, Rest of Maine

Raising my children with a better understanding of our Jewish heritage. – female, Southern Maine

Teaching about Jews and Judaism

For 54 respondents, the greatest satisfaction, joy, or meaning in their lives as Jewish people in Maine can be found in activities that teach children and young adults about Jews and Judaism. Most of these respondents wrote about transmitting Jewish identity to their children and grandchildren, but some wrote more generally about educating people of all ages, both Jewish and non-Jewish.

Seeing our kids going to (and enjoying) Jewish day camp—having them coming home learning new songs from their Israeli counselors and finding joy in their Jewish identities. – female, 40, Southern Maine

Teaching and helping organize kid/youth and adult events. – female, 18-39, Southern Maine

I love engaging my children in Jewish traditions and a connected lineage. – female, Rest of Maine

Watching our children grow into proud Jews by participating in multiple Jewish communities here. – female, 18-39, Southern Maine

CHAPTER 12. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The words of community members, taken together with the findings presented in Chapters 1-10, contribute to a detailed portrait of the Jewish community of Maine. This study has described community members' demographic characteristics; their participation in Jewish communal life; as well as their private Jewish activities and attitudes about Judaism, Israel, and the local Jewish community. However, one of the challenges of this study is that unlike most local Jewish community studies, this is not a study of a single Jewish community but rather a study of several distinct communities. Over 60% of the Jewish population of Maine resides in Southern Maine—defined for the purposes of this study as Cumberland, Sagadahoc, and York Counties—and that population is most heavily concentrated in Portland and the immediately adjacent suburbs. In the rest of the state, there are clear concentrations of Jewish populations in Augusta, Bangor, Lewiston-Auburn, Rockland, and Waterville, with smaller groups in cities and towns across the map. From Kittery in the south to Fort Kent in the north, and from the New Hampshire border in the west to the Atlantic Ocean and the border with New Brunswick in the east, Jews and Jewish life can be found throughout the state. Each community is unique and each has its own needs and interests, but with the amount of data available, it is not advisable to draw generalizable conclusions for each city or town. Accordingly, this study's conclusions and recommendations are limited to those that are clear from a holistic assessment of the data provided by the 1,366 respondents who completed the survey.

It is difficult to say whether the Jewish community of Maine as of 2024 is shrinking, stable, or growing. From the time the research team started speaking with the staff of the JCA and the Center for Small Town Jewish Life about the possibility of a community study, we heard from several members of the community that they believed the Jewish population was growing. They told us that they knew of many anecdotes of Jewish individuals and families who moved to Maine to flee crowded cities during the COVID-19 pandemic, to escape high-cost-of-living areas, or to retire to a more bucolic setting than where they resided previously. But they also believed that the Maine Jewish community trended older than the national Jewish community, a factor that could counteract potential growth. We believe the Jewish community of Maine is likely larger than it was in 2007, but we cannot assume a constant rate of growth over the 17 years between studies.

Nevertheless, some facts are clear: **The Jewish community of Maine is larger than many of its members believe, and many members are not involved in the organized Jewish community.** This study estimates that there are 19,000 Jews residing in Maine for at least part of the year. However, 42% of Jewish adults in the community are members of an engagement group characterized by having little to no involvement in Jewish organizations. Some of these Jewish adults are not involved in Jewish organizations because their homes are far from the nearest Jewish communal building, and these individuals would be more engaged were organizations closer to them. However, many others are disengaged because Jewish communal life is simply not a priority to them. Regardless of their reasons for not being involved, their low level of communal engagement means they are not on the radar of Jewish organizations and, as a result, may contribute to a mistaken narrative about the size of the Maine Jewish community.

Additionally, it is apparent that **Jewish life is thriving in Maine, both in its historic center in Portland and in several other locations throughout the state.** The Jewish community of Maine consists of more than just Portland and Bangor, the city with the next-largest Jewish population. The JCA is a hub of Jewish communal life in Southern Maine and the Center for Small Town Jewish Life is active statewide and a key organizer of Jewish programming accessible in the Rest of Maine region. Although synagogues play a key role in the life of the Jewish community throughout the state, there are also numerous grassroots Jewish organizations and activities. Many members of the community who are not inclined to participate in Jewish organizations or are unable to access them are still active in Jewish life in their own ways. We heard from several members of the community who are particularly enamored of the ways Jewish and Maine cultures mix to produce environmentally and socially conscious ways of living Jewishly, whether experiencing the natural beauty of the state as an ideal locale to *daven*, harvesting ice from a local pond to provide the living waters for the new *mikvah* in Waterville, advocating for sustainable farming practices, or neighbors stepping up to take responsibility for each other's welfare. Jewish individuals, families, and small groups throughout the state are finding ways to express their Jewish identities, both within formal Jewish community institutions and out in nature, and both under the auspices of Jewish organizations and on their own.

Recommendations:

Be sensitive to differences of resources, backgrounds, and identities: There are deep social, economic, religious, and political divides running through the Maine Jewish community. Many members of the community face significant financial barriers to participating in Jewish communal life, and some feel they are not valued by Jewish organizations because they cannot afford to pay membership dues to belong to an organization or to make significant charitable donations. Not every member of the Maine Jewish community has an extensive Jewish educational background; nearly one-in-five Jewish adults in Maine cite their own lack of Jewish knowledge as a key barrier that limits their participation in Jewish programs. Several comments on the open-ended questions summarized in Chapter 11 addressed experiences of discomfort in Jewish organizations based on having family members who were not Jewish, particularly spouses, or being non-white or having family members who were Persons of Color who felt they faced discrimination on the basis of race. The Jewish community of Maine cannot afford for its members to feel they are not welcome in Jewish spaces because of their resources, backgrounds, or identities, and must continue its efforts to ensure that all feel welcome.

Support families in need: Collectively, the Jewish community of Maine is financially stable and comfortable. Most of the members of the community are middle class, and a substantial proportion of the population is quite well-off. Unfortunately, 16% of Jewish households in Maine either cannot make ends meet (1%) or are just managing to make ends meet (15%). Twenty-two percent of Jewish adults in Maine had to limit or alter their involvement in Jewish life in the past year due to their financial situation. Forty-six percent of Jewish households in Maine have student loans, credit card debt, or medical debt, and, for 33% of Jewish households, these debts are at least sometimes a source of stress. Twenty-one percent of Jewish households in Maine lack the savings to cover three months of expenses. To best serve families in need, it may be necessary to raise awareness of resources available within the community, particularly for young adults, families with children, and older adults. If possible, it may also be helpful to allocate new resources to assistance programs, particularly at this time, when assistance from the federal government is being cut.

Reach out to newcomers: Thirty-seven percent of Jewish adults in Maine have resided in their current counties for less than 10 years. Although a quarter of these adults moved to their current county from elsewhere in Maine, the vast majority moved from another state or another country. These newcomers to the Maine Jewish community find themselves in an environment where 28% of Jewish adults have lived in Maine for their entire adult lives, aside from college or graduate school, and 47% of Jewish adults have lived in their current counties for 20 or more years. Many newcomers report that it is often assumed that everyone in the Jewish community already knows the community's history, traditions, and folkways, making it challenging for those who do not already have this knowledge to build the cultural capital they need to thrive in Jewish communal settings. This is particularly critical in small Jewish communities like Maine's, where there is often no alternative option if someone finds an organization or program uncomfortable or not welcoming. It may be helpful to introduce new residents to their options for synagogues, Jewish schools, and Jewish cultural programs and activities, and to create opportunities for them to meet fellow Jews who share their interests.

Expand resources for remote members of the community: An emerging body of literature confirms that it can be very difficult to be Jewish in a place where there are few Jews, but also very rewarding. This duality is part of the *raison d'être* of the Center for Small Town Jewish Life, a highly valued resource and source of pride for the Jewish community of Maine. Respondents across the map expressed their appreciation for the Center, but the Center does not have unlimited resources. It is no more practical to ask Maine Jews who live in remote communities to move than it is to build synagogues, develop formal organizations, or to bring activities to out-of-the-way locations, but many Maine Jews who live in such communities are eager for greater engagement with the organized Jewish community. We admire the commitment of parents who drive their children for multiple hours each way, particularly during the winter, to ensure that they have opportunities to study and connect with Jewish peers. We applaud the tenacity of Jewish individuals and families who stand alone against antisemitism in their local schools or governments. And we encourage the Jewish community outside of Maine to emulate the creativity and innovation of Maine Jews who continually find new ways to use the environment around them to express their Jewish identities. It is clear that the community's investments in helping Jews in remote parts of the state have borne fruit, and it is likely that expanding those investments will yield additional benefits.

Promote opportunities for volunteering in and with the Jewish community: Many Jewish adults in Maine are active or even habitual volunteers, but only 23% have volunteered in the past year with any Jewish organization. Research on the volunteering habits and preferences of American Jews suggests that volunteering is a core activity that appeals across ages, denominations, and socioeconomic statuses, and can be especially valuable for providing an outlet that unites universal prosocial values with individuals' Jewish identities. Because of its broad appeal, volunteering can be a means of providing low-cost, low-barrier activities that help integrate newcomers into the Maine Jewish community and bring together people of different backgrounds, resources, and interests.

Invest in Jewish education: Seventeen percent of Jewish children in Maine who were eligible by their grade levels were enrolled in a Jewish day school or Hebrew school during the 2023-24 school year; 14% participated in Jewish youth programming such as a youth group or teen program, a volunteer or leadership development program, or tutoring or private classes during the 2023-24 school year; 13% attended or worked as staff at a Jewish summer camp in the summer of 2024. Parents in Southern Maine whose children were not enrolled in a Jewish day school cited several reasons for not enrolling their children, including that the school did not meet their family's needs or

interests, a preference for a more diverse learning environment, a sense that the quality of general education offered was insufficient, the expense, or a concern that the school did not provide sufficient support services. Similarly, parents of children who were not enrolled in Hebrew school cited a number of reasons, including a lack of a good religious fit, the location of the school, the schedule, lack of a good social fit, and cost. These barriers may not be easy to overcome, but they are not impenetrable. A robust Jewish education in childhood is the single greatest predictor of having a strong Jewish identity and comfort in Jewish spaces in adulthood. To ensure the continued viability and creativity of the Maine Jewish community, the community should explore options for addressing barriers to participation in its Jewish educational offerings and, in particular, to learn in what ways current options do not meet families' needs.

Cultivate healthier conversations about Israel: The Maine Jewish community has strong ties to Israel. Fifty-seven percent of Jewish adults in the community feel either somewhat or very attached to Israel, and nearly half have visited at least once. Large majorities somewhat or strongly agree that it is important for Israel to be a democratic state, that it is important for Israel to exist as a refuge for the Jewish people, that American Jews have the right to criticize the Israeli government, that it is important for Israel to be a Jewish state, and that they feel proud of Israel's accomplishments. Yet there are also points of tension. Sixty-two percent of Jewish adults in the community somewhat or strongly agree that Israel regularly violates the human rights of the Palestinian people. Thirty-seven percent somewhat or strongly agree that they describe themselves as Zionists, while 44% somewhat or strongly disagree, and 19% express no opinion or are unsure. Thirty-two percent somewhat or strongly agree that local Jewish organizations share their views about Israel, while 20% somewhat or strongly disagree, and 47% have no opinion or are unsure. And 37% say they somewhat or strongly agree that they often feel they do not know enough to participate in conversations about Israel. Responses to the open-ended questions summarized in Chapter 11 reveal a great deal of angst about how members of the Maine Jewish community perceive communal attitudes toward Israel and the Palestinians, particularly in the aftermath of October 7. Some respondents believe that fellow members of the community and Jewish organizations that do not share their views deserve harsh criticism or even ostracism. Others expressed a desire for communal institutions to announce their unequivocal support for Israel, without regard to current domestic or foreign policy actions. Still others feel that communal organizations' inability to facilitate constructive dialogue alienates members of the community who are committed to their Jewish identities but are troubled by current Israeli policies. These challenges are shared by Jewish communities across the diaspora, but educational programs and facilitated discussions may help to foster greater mutual respect and understanding between members of the Maine Jewish community.

Monitor antisemitism, but do not panic: There is significant anxiety in the Maine Jewish community over antisemitism, whether locally, in the United States, or around the world. About half of Jewish adults in the community have altered their behavior in some way in the past year due to fear of antisemitism, and about one third of Jewish adults in Maine have personally been the target of one or more of the following: an antisemitic remark from a stranger, an antisemitic remark from someone they know, an antisemitic act of vandalism, or an antisemitic physical attack or threat of attack. Some members of the community have noted that they were disappointed at the lack of support they received from Jewish institutions when they encountered antisemitic incidents in their children's schools or from local governmental bodies, indicating that greater action is needed in response to such incidents. However, other respondents noted that added visible security personnel in Jewish communal buildings made them uncomfortable. The community would be wise to continue carefully monitoring incidents of antisemitism throughout the state on an ongoing basis,

while balancing the need for greater security in a time of rising antisemitism against the comfort and sense of normalcy of members of the community.

Jewish communities in the United States have been conducting local population studies for 100 years, making this study part of a long tradition of using the tools of social science to assess the Jewish community's size, characteristics, interests, needs, and concerns. This study measures participation in communal and individual Jewish practices, institutional engagement, unmet needs, and many other aspects of Jewish life. We hope that this snapshot of the community will stimulate discussion about how best to enhance Jewish life throughout Maine.

NOTES

¹ Leonard Saxe, Theodore Sasson, and Janet Krasner Aronson, “Pew’s Portrait of American Jewry: A Reassessment of the Assimilation Narrative,” in *American Jewish Year Book 2014*, ed. A. Dashefsky and I. Sheskin (New York, NY: Springer International Publishing, 2015), 78–81.

² Ira Sheskin. (2007). *The 2007 Jewish Community Study of Southern Maine*. Portland, ME: Jewish Community Alliance of Southern Maine.

³ For more information on response rates, see Appendix A and the standard definitions provided by the American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR), available here: <https://aapor.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Standards-Definitions-10th-edition.pdf>

⁴ US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2023 five-year estimates.

⁵ Pew Research Center, “Jewish Americans in 2020.” (Washington, DC: Pew Research Center, 2021.)

⁶ Although both Pew surveys include respondents who would be classified as JMR under this scheme, Pew does not use this category, and it does not map neatly onto the JBR/JNR binary. Nevertheless, CMJS/SSRI Jewish community studies include this category because we believe it provides a more accurate representation of the diversity of Jewish identity.

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

⁸ The total adds up to more than 100% because 8% have both adult children living at home and adult children living elsewhere.

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

¹⁰ Pew Research Center, “Jewish Americans in 2020.”

¹¹ Although point estimates suggest that Jewish adults in the Rest of Maine region are slightly more moderate than Jewish adults in Southern Maine, the difference is not statistically significant.

¹² Although Figure 3.4 shows that 51% of Jewish adults in Maine are intermarried, this does not contradict the finding reported in Chapter 2 that the intermarriage rate is 60%. The proportion reported here includes individuals who are not married; the rate reported in Chapter 2 was based only on those who are married.

¹³ See also Janet Krasner Aronson, Matthew A. Brookner, Matthew Boxer, Daniel Nussbaum, Raquel Magidin de Kramer, and Leonard Saxe. (2024). Using denominational identity to understand Jewish engagement. In A Dashefsky & I.M. Sheskin (eds.), *American Jewish Year Book 2023* (Vol. 123), pp. 37-60. Cham, Switzerland: Springer International Publishing.

¹⁴ For example, there were only 150 respondents who were asked about the primary reasons they did not send any of their children to Jewish camp. While Table 4.7 gives a point estimate that 10% of these families cited cost as a reason, more precisely, there is a 95% probability that the true proportion is between 5% and 19%.

¹⁵ Although there are no children of two Jewish parents in the study dataset who are not being raised Jewish in some way, this does not mean there are no such children in Maine. This finding should be interpreted to mean that there are very few children of two Jewish parents in Maine who are not being raised Jewish in some way.

¹⁶ These estimates are based on 176 respondents and should be used with caution. It is likely that the true rate for Maine is similar to the national average.

¹⁷ Pew Research Center, “Jewish Americans in 2020.”

¹⁸ Reminder: For the purposes of this study, “children” are defined as being under age 18, though adults who are still in high school are included in analyses of children’s Jewish education. Based on the timing of the survey, it is certain that some high school students who were 18 years old are not accounted for in this table.

¹⁹ For the purposes of this study, “age-eligible” means that the child in question is of an appropriate age or grade level in school to be eligible for the activity in question. Thus, for example, a child is age-eligible for preschool if they are not yet in kindergarten.

²⁰ Respondents were not asked to identify the Jewish day camp their children attended. However, it is likely that most of these children attended Center Day Camp.

²¹ The only Jewish day school in Maine is in Portland. Although it is possible that some parents outside of Cumberland, Sagadahoc, or York Counties might consider sending their children to the school if it is not too far away, as a practical matter, we made the simplifying assumption that the daily commute would be too great for nearly all parents who might consider a Jewish day school if one were closer to home. Accordingly, households that reside outside of Southern Maine were not asked questions about sending their children to a Jewish day school.

²² Based on 121 responses.

²³ Parents in Southern Maine whose children were enrolled in day school were *not* asked why their children were not enrolled in Hebrew school. In these cases, we assume that they were not enrolled in Hebrew school *because* they were enrolled in day school.

²⁴ Based on 70 responses.

²⁵ Based on 150 responses.

²⁶ Pew Research Center, “Jewish Americans in 2020.”

²⁷ This category includes respondents who indicated that someone in the household was a member of a Jewish congregation but did not indicate which congregation.

²⁸ In comparison, the Pew Research Center’s “Jewish Americans in 2020” reports that 20% of American Jewish adults attended services in the past year weekly (12%) or once or twice a month (8%).

²⁹ The Pew Research Center’s “Jewish Americans in 2020” included a similar question with different response options. Pew reported the 39% of American Jewish adults celebrated Shabbat in the past year in ways that were meaningful to them “often” (20%) or “sometimes” (19%).

³⁰ The Pew Research Center’s “Jewish Americans in 2020” reported that 62% of American Jewish adults attended a Passover seder in the year prior to the study.

³¹ In “Jewish Americans in 2020,” the Pew Research Center reported that 29% of American Jewish adults said all or most of their friends were Jewish, 44% said that some of their friends were Jewish, and 25% said that hardly any or none of their friends were Jewish.

³² The Pew Research Center’s “Jewish Americans in 2020” included a question with slightly different response options. Pew reported that 85% of American Jewish adults felt at least “some” connection to the Jewish people, including 48% who felt “a great deal” of belonging.

³³ Membership in and donations (see the “Volunteering and philanthropy” section later in this chapter) to the JCA are difficult to assess in a survey because the JCA is a complex organization that combines the local Jewish Federation and Jewish Community Center (JCC). “Members” are members of the JCC, while “donors” may be donors to either or both organizations. Given the true numbers of members and donors, we believe it is likely that there are donors who did not pay for memberships but nevertheless believe they are dues-paying members.

³⁴ Estimates for participating in programs sponsored by the JCA are for Jewish adults in Southern Maine only. All other program sponsors listed in this figure apply to the entire state.

³⁵ For analyses based on political orientation, respondents who identify as “conservative” and “very conservative” are combined into a single category because there are not enough respondents in either category to stand alone. As noted in Chapter 2, only 6% of Jewish adults in Maine describe themselves as “conservative,” and 1% describe themselves as “very conservative.”

³⁶ The Pew Research Center’s “Jewish Americans in 2020” included a similar question. Pew reported that 71% of American Jewish adults cook or eat traditional Jewish foods “often” (27%) or “sometimes” (44%).

³⁷ Similarly, in “Jewish Americans in 2020,” the Pew Research Center reported that 48% of American Jewish adults donated in the past year to any Jewish charity or cause.

³⁸ Pew Research Center, “Jewish Americans in 2020.”

³⁹ Pew Research Center, “Jewish Americans in 2020.”

⁴⁰ In addition to the specific items listed in Tables 8.5a and 8.5b, respondents were given the opportunity to indicate that they did “something else” in response to October 7 and write in what that was. The responses are not easily categorized and include such activities as praying, buying more guns, joining Palestinian solidarity organizations, hanging Israeli flags outside their homes, traveling to Israel, learning more about the conflict, more actively reading the news, and avoiding the news.

⁴¹ As previously noted, for analyses based on political orientation, respondents who identify as “conservative” and “very conservative” are combined into a single category because there are not enough respondents in either category to stand alone.

⁴² Pew Research Center, “Jewish Americans in 2020.”

⁴³ The Pew Research Center’s “Jewish Americans in 2020” included a similar question. Pew reported that 48% of American Jewish adults were working full-time and 14% were working part-time.

⁴⁴ The Pew Research Center’s “Jewish Americans in 2020” included a similar question. Pew reported that 2% of American Jewish households “don’t meet basic expenses,” and 15% could “just meet basic expenses.”

⁴⁵ According to the US Federal Reserve, in 2023, 37% of US households could not cover a \$400 emergency expense. <https://www.federalreserve.gov/publications/files/2023-report-economic-well-being-us-households-202405.pdf>

⁴⁶ A small number of respondents receive more than one form of public benefits; all of these respondents receive assistance with food, housing, or utilities and one other public benefit. This should not be interpreted to mean that more Jewish households in Maine are not eligible for multiple benefits; it may mean that there are eligible households who are not receiving benefits to which they are entitled.

⁴⁷ These questions were not asked of households that described their financial status as “well off.” For the sake of simplicity, these households were coded as not having received any of these public benefits. Estimates in Tables 9.13 and 9.14 reflect these missing value imputations.

⁴⁸ The Pew Research Center’s “Jewish Americans in 2020” included a similar question. Pew reported that 85% of American Jewish adults felt their physical health was “good” (57%) or “excellent” (28%).

⁴⁹ In this context, *tikkun olam* is a reference to the Jewish value of taking personal responsibility to improve the world in any of a wide array of physical or spiritual ways. It often takes on the form of social activism.