

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For the *2021-22 Study of Jewish Louisville*, the Maurice and Marilyn Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies (CMJS) and the Steinhardt Social Research Institute (SSRI) at Brandeis University employed innovative, state-of-the-art methods to create a comprehensive portrait of the size, characteristics, attitudes, and behaviors of the present-day Jewish community in Louisville and the surrounding area. Where possible, the study also provides national context by comparing findings to the results of the Pew Research Center's 2020 national study of the Jewish community in the United States. This report is based on data collected from 817 households that completed a survey between October 2021 and January 2022.

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

- Estimate the number of Jewish adults and children in the community, as well as the number of non-Jewish adults and children residing in Jewish households
- Describe the community in terms of age and gender, geographic distribution, health and economic well-being, and other sociodemographic traits
- Measure participation in Jewish communal programs and organizations
- Assess the multifaceted cultural, communal, and religious expressions of Judaism that constitute Jewish engagement
- Assess attitudes toward Judaism, the Jewish community, and Israel

DEMOGRAPHICS

- The Louisville Jewish community numbers approximately 18,300 adults and children, of whom 14,200 are Jewish and living in 7,100 households. These households include:
 - ◊ 12,000 Jewish adults
 - ◊ 2,200 Jewish children
 - ◊ 3,100 non-Jewish adults
 - ◊ 1,100 non-Jewish children
- The mean age of Jewish adults in Louisville is 48, and the median age is 50, comparable to the national median age of Jewish adults, 49. The mean age of all Jewish individuals in Louisville is 43, and the median age is 39.
- Twenty-nine percent of Jewish households in Louisville include children under age 18.
- The individual intermarriage rate (i.e., the proportion of married Jewish adults with a non-Jewish spouse) is 37%, slightly below the national average of 42%.
- Thirty-seven percent of Jewish adults in Louisville do not identify with any particular denomination of Judaism. One percent identify as Orthodox, 23% as Conservative, 26% as Reform, and 12% identify with other denominations.
- Six percent of Jewish adults in Louisville identify as LGBTQ.
- Three percent of Jewish adults in Louisville grew up in Russian-speaking households.
- One percent of Jewish adults in Louisville are Israeli citizens.
- Three percent of Jewish adults in Louisville identify as Hispanic or with any racial group other than white. By contrast, 14% of Jewish children are identified as Hispanic or with any racial group other than white.
- Fifty-eight percent of Jewish adults in Louisville identify politically as very liberal or liberal. Another 29% describe themselves as moderate, and 9% reported they are conservative or very conservative. The remaining 4% said they preferred not to describe their political views.
- Forty-six percent of Jewish households and 39% of Jewish individuals live in the Central region. Twenty-seven percent of Jewish households and 30% of Jewish individuals reside in the Northeast region, and the remaining 27% of Jewish households and 31% of Jewish individuals reside in the remainder of the Louisville area.
- Half (50%) of Jewish adults in Louisville were raised locally, and 41% have resided in Louisville their entire lives except to attend college and/or graduate studies.
- Fifty-four percent of Jewish adults in Louisville have resided in the area for 20 or more years, and another 25% have resided in the area for 10-19 years. Twenty-one percent of Jewish adults moved to the area in the past decade, including 13% who have lived in the area for fewer than five years.

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 Louisville—not on self-identities.
- Engagement groups include people of all ages and denominational identities.
- The Index can be used to identify opportunities to improve communal planning based on people’s different needs and interests.
- Four distinct patterns of behavior emerge from the data.
 - ◊ Minimally Involved (32% of Jewish adults): Characterized by involvement in few elements of Jewish life.
 - ◊ Holiday (41% of Jewish adults): Characterized by having their highest level of participation in holiday observances and other activities that do not necessarily require involvement in organizations.
 - ◊ Ritual (14% of Jewish adults): Characterized by high involvement in holiday, synagogue, and ritual behaviors.
 - ◊ Involved (13% of Jewish adults): Characterized by high involvement in most elements of Jewish life.
- Demographic characteristics are related to membership in these four engagement groups.

JEWISH CHILDREN

- Among the 3,300 children who live in Jewish households in Louisville, 2,200 (67%) are being raised Jewish, either exclusively or with another religion.
- Among the 1,100 children not being raised Jewish, 600 are being raised in no religion, 400 are being raised exclusively in another religion, and 100 have parents who have not yet decided how to raise them or who did not provide enough information to assess their Jewish identities.
- The vast majority (83%) of children of two Jewish parents in Louisville are being raised Jewish. Nearly all of those children with two Jewish parents who do not say they are raising their children Jewish are either being raised in no religion or the parents have not yet decided how to raise the children.
- Among children of intermarried parents in Louisville, 50% are being raised Jewish in some way.
- Of Jewish children in Louisville not yet in kindergarten, 20% were enrolled in a Jewish preschool or early childhood program during the 2021-22 school year.
- Sixteen percent of Jewish children in grades K-12 in Louisville were enrolled in some form of Jewish school during the 2021-22 school year. This share includes 2% in a Jewish day school and 14% in a part-time school.

- Families not belonging to a synagogue (62%) or parents feeling that none of the available options was a good fit (32%) were the most commonly cited reasons for lack of enrollment in a Jewish day school or part-time school.
- Seven percent of Louisville Jewish children in grades K-12 attended a Jewish summer camp in the summer of 2021.
- Among Jewish households in Louisville with at least one child age 12 or younger, 18% received books from PJ Library.

FINANCIAL WELL-BEING AND HEALTH NEEDS

- Among the 7,100 Jewish households in Louisville, 18% are serving as primary caregivers for a relative, separate from routine childcare.
- About half (49%) of caregivers are helping a parent or parent-in-law, but some are providing care for a spouse (25%) or a child, whether a minor (1%) or an adult age 18 and older (1%). Twenty-four percent of caregivers provide or manage care for someone not in these categories.
- Thirty-one percent of Jewish households in Louisville include at least one person who is limited in their work, school, or activities by some sort of health issue, special need, or disability.
- Twenty-eight percent of Jewish adults in Louisville said they felt lonely sometimes, often, or all the time during the past week.
- Seventeen percent of Jewish adults felt that emotional or mental health difficulties hurt their ability to live their day-to-day lives sometimes, often, or all the time during the previous week.
- Thirty-six percent of Jewish adults said they only have a few people they can count on in their support networks, and 2% percent reported not being able to rely on anyone.
- Eleven percent of Jewish households that include at least one adult age 55 or older do not have access to transportation when needed for medical appointments, meetings, work, or daily tasks. Another 1% only have access to transportation some of the time.
- Nineteen percent of Jewish households with at least one adult age 55 or older include someone who needs help with daily activities such as household chores, preparing meals, or taking stairs.
- Sixty-one percent of Jewish adults in Louisville have attained at least a bachelor's degree.
- Fourteen percent of Jewish households in Louisville say they cannot make ends meet (2%) or are just managing to make ends meet (12%).

SYNAGOGUES AND RITUAL LIFE

- Twenty-six percent of Jewish households in Louisville include someone who belongs to a synagogue, independent *minyan* or *chavurah*, Chabad, or another Jewish worship community.
- Fifty-one percent of Jewish adults in Louisville attended services at least once during the past year, whether in person or online.
- Twelve percent of Jewish adults attended services once a month or more.
- Thirty-six percent of Jewish adults attended High Holiday services in 2021.
- Seventy-nine percent of Jewish adults in Louisville light Hanukkah candles in a typical year.
- Fifty-seven percent of Jewish adults in Louisville attended or hosted a Passover seder in 2021.
- Twenty-four percent of Jewish adults in Louisville fast for part or all of the day on Yom Kippur in 2021. Another 18% of Jewish adults could not fast for medical reasons.
- Twenty-five percent of Jewish adults in Louisville keep any of the laws of *kasbrut*.
- In the past year, 43% of Jewish adults in Louisville lit Shabbat candles at least once, and 29% had a special meal for Shabbat at least once.

ORGANIZATIONS AND PHILANTHROPY

- Thirty percent of Jewish adults in Louisville belong to a Jewish organization other than a synagogue. Fifteen percent belong to an informal or grassroots Jewish group.
- Fifty-two percent of Jewish adults in Louisville attended at least one Jewish program in the past year. Twenty-nine percent participated in programs sponsored by a synagogue, 22% in programs sponsored by the JCC or JCL, and 5% in programs sponsored by Chabad.
- Many Jewish adults in Louisville participated in informal Jewish cultural activities in the past year, including discussing Jewish topics (96%), eating Jewish foods (88%), consuming Jewish culture (e.g., reading books, watching movies or TV, or listening to music; 86%), reading publications from Jewish organizations (77%), reading or posting on social media about Jewish life (49%), and studying Jewish texts (43%).
- Eighteen percent of Jewish adults in Louisville volunteered for Jewish organizations in the past month.
- Sixty-four percent of Jewish adults in Louisville donated to Jewish organizations in the past year, including 15% who donated to the Jewish Federation of Louisville.

COMMUNITY, CONNECTIONS, AND CONCERNS

- Ninety-seven percent of Jewish adults in Louisville feel at least some sense of belonging to the Jewish people, including 48% who feel this connection a great deal.
- Eighty-three percent of Jewish adults in Louisville feel at least some connection to the local Jewish community, including 18% who feel this connection a great deal.

- Fifty-eight percent of Jewish adults in Louisville feel at least some connection to an online Jewish community, including 8% who feel this connection a great deal.
- Twenty percent of Jewish adults in Louisville are very satisfied with their current level of participation in the local Jewish community, and another 39% are somewhat satisfied.
- The four most common barriers to participation in the Jewish community cited by Jewish adults in Louisville are not knowing many people (41%), a lack of confidence in Jewish knowledge (29%), a lack of interesting activities (21%), and the cost of participation (20%).
- Seventy-five percent of Jewish adults in Louisville say they have at least some close Jewish friends, including 18% who say most or all of their close friends are Jewish.
- Sixty-four percent of Jewish adults in Louisville are very concerned about antisemitism around the world, and 57% are very concerned about antisemitism in the United States. By contrast, only 30% are very concerned about antisemitism in Louisville.
- Twelve percent of Jewish adults in Louisville personally experienced one or more antisemitic incidents in the past year.

CONNECTIONS TO ISRAEL

- Thirty-nine percent of Jewish adults in Louisville have been to Israel at least once.
- One quarter of Jewish adults in Louisville who were ever eligible to do so have traveled to Israel on a Birthright Israel trip.
- Eighty percent of Jewish adults in Louisville feel some sense of emotional attachment to Israel, including 20% who feel very attached.
- Sixty-one percent of Jewish adults in Louisville follow news about Israel somewhat (49%) or very closely (12%).