

HOWARD COUNTY 2019 JEWISH COMMUNITY STUDY

A PORTRAIT OF **JEWISH LIFE** IN HOWARD COUNTY, MARYLAND

Jewish Federation
of Howard County



Brandeis

COHEN CENTER FOR
MODERN JEWISH STUDIES
STEINHARDT SOCIAL
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Maurice and Marilyn Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies

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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 socio-demographic data on the Jewish community.

JEWISH FEDERATION OF HOWARD COUNTY ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Jewish Federation of Howard County (JFHC) is pleased to present the findings of our 2019 Jewish Community Study.

The JFHC's mission is to build a vibrant, inclusive, and engaged Jewish community. We do so by helping those in need in Howard County, building community through our many programs and partnerships, enriching local Jewish life, and strengthening Jewish global peoplehood.


But in order to fulfil our mission, we must better understand the demographics of our Jewish community's residents, as well as their attitudes and needs. The results of our 2019 Jewish Community Study provides us with that needed information. The findings from the study will significantly impact the JFHC's strategies and work so that we can allocate our precious resources—made possible by our generous donors—for maximum impact.

The JFHC was able to undertake this deep-dive into our community thanks to a similar 2019 community study commissioned by The Associated: The Jewish Federation of Baltimore. While our survey focused exclusively on Howard County's Jewish residents, we were able to enjoy significant cost-savings by aligning ourselves with The Associated's study. We wish to thank our colleagues at The Associated—especially Mark Smolarz and Ruth Miller—for making this possible and for encouraging the JFHC to undertake its own comprehensive community survey.

We also wish to thank the authors of this study, from the Maurice and Marilyn Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies at Brandeis University, who conducted the survey. Led ably by principal researcher, Dr. Matthew Boxer, the Brandeis team included Matthew A. Brookner, Eliana Chapman, Harry Aaronson, Daniel Mangoubi, Dr. Janet Krasner Aronson, and Dr. Leonard Saxe, who directs the Cohen Center. They used the most advanced research techniques to provide us with a high-quality report, which produced reliable findings.

A total of 915 Jewish households participated in this study. It allows us to gain important insights into contemporary Jewish life in Howard County—the beliefs, practices, values, and rituals that add meaning for our core constituencies and the many subgroups in our community. This data will enable our own planning and will also prove helpful to local synagogues and congregations, religious schools and pre-schools, and community groups. We hope this study will inspire robust conversations and forward-thinking among our Jewish communal leaders and members of our community, in general.

Finally, we wish to especially thank two members of the JFHC Board of Directors—Beth Millstein and Laura Salganik—for their extraordinary dedication to this project, for their reviews of early drafts, for their thoughtful feedback, and for their ongoing support.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rachael Simon". The script is fluid and cursive.

Rachael Simon
President

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ralph Grunewald". The script is fluid and cursive.

Ralph Grunewald
Executive Director

CMJS/SSRI ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Brandeis research team is grateful to the Jewish Federation of Howard County for the opportunity to collaborate to develop and conduct the 2019 community study. The study was proposed and sponsored by the Federation and The Associated: Jewish Community Federation of Baltimore, whose staff, Board of Directors, and Community Study Committee provided valuable input on the study design, questionnaire, and report. We are particularly grateful to Ralph Grunewald, Executive Director of the Jewish Federation of Howard County. He helped us learn about the community and ensured that our work would be of the highest quality and utility for the Howard County Jewish community. We also thank the respondents who completed the survey. Without their willingness to spend time answering numerous questions about their lives, there could be no study.

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Deborah Grant provided editorial advice and feedback and, along with Harry Aaronson, prepared the report for publication. We are also grateful to Masha Lokshin and Ilana Friedman for their logistical and editorial support throughout the study.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2019 Howard County 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, employed innovative, state-of-the-art methods to create a comprehensive portrait of the characteristics, attitudes, and behaviors of present-day Howard County Jewry. Some of the issues explored in the 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 With the Pew study and the related national discourse as a backdrop, the dynamics of Howard County's Jewish community took on added significance.

The principal goal of this study was to provide valid data about the Howard County Jewish community that could 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, gender, marital status, and other sociodemographic characteristics
- Measure participation in community programs and institutional Judaism, and understand reasons for participation
- Understand the multifaceted cultural, communal, and religious expressions of Judaism that constitute Jewish engagement
- Assess attitudes toward Israel and Judaism

DEMOGRAPHICS

- As of 2019, the Howard County Jewish community includes 18,700 Jewish individuals, of whom 14,900 are adults and 3,900 are children ages 17 and younger. In addition, there are 5,100 non-Jewish adults and 1,000 non-Jewish children living in households with a Jewish individual.
- These 24,900 Jewish and non-Jewish individuals live in 9,100 Jewish households.
- Jewish individuals comprise about 5.7% of Howard County's entire population, compared to approximately 2.2% of the United States overall.
- The ages of Jewish adults in Howard County are similar to that of the national Jewish population, with the mean age being 50 years old.
- Thirty-two percent of Howard County's Jewish households include a child under the age of 18, and another 29% of households are comprised of a married or partnered couple who do not live with children. The majority of single-person Jewish households are of individuals under the age of 45.
- Only 9% of Jewish adults were raised in the Howard County or Baltimore area; 81% were raised elsewhere in the United States, and the remaining 10% grew up in another country. Of those who were not raised in the area, 45% have been in Howard County for at least 20 years, and 25% for fewer than five years.
- Nearly three quarters of Jewish households, 73%, include a couple that is married, engaged, or partnered. Among Jewish adults, 79% are married, engaged, or partnered. Sixty-five percent of these couples are inmarried, and 35% are intermarried. The Howard County rate of intermarriage is lower than the national intermarriage rate of 44%.

JEWISH ENGAGEMENT

- We found four broad patterns of engagement in Jewish life based on family holiday celebrations such as participating in a Passover seder; ritual practices such as attending High Holiday services; communal activities such as donating to Jewish causes; and personal activities such as following news about Israel.
- Half of Jewish adults can be classified as part of the "Occasional" group, which has occasional (primarily holidays) participation in Jewish life. The "Personal" group comprises 19% of Jewish adults, who participate primarily in personal Jewish activities. The "Organizational" group includes 13% of Jewish adults, whose participation in Jewish life comes primarily through Jewish organizations, and some rituals. The final 18% fall into the "Involved" group, who participate widely in ritual and personal activities and some organizational ones.
- Age and Jewish engagement are related. Although Jews younger than age 45 comprise 35% of the adult Jewish population, 46% of the Occasional group are younger than age 45, compared to 23% of adults ages 65 and older.
- Denomination and Jewish engagement are also interrelated: 86% each of the Organizational and Involved groups identify with a denomination. Overall, however, only 56% of Jewish adults in Howard County identify with a denomination.

JEWISH CHILDREN AND EDUCATION

- Among the 4,900 minor children in Howard County's Jewish households, 3,900, or 79%, are being raised Jewish in some way.
- Among Jewish children, 3,500 are being raised only as Jews, either by religion or secularly, and another 400 are being raised in another religion in addition to Judaism.
- Of the 1,000 children not being raised as Jews, 800 are being raised without religion.
- There were approximately 200 Jewish children enrolled in a Jewish early childhood center or daycare in Howard County during the 2018-19 academic year; this is 20% of all age-eligible Jewish children.
- About 500 Jewish children in grades K-12 were enrolled in a part-time Jewish school during 2018-19; they represent 16% of the age-eligible Jewish children.
- About 800 Jewish children in grades K-12, or 25% of those age-eligible, participated in some form of informal Jewish education, such as camp or youth group.

SYNAGOGUE AND RITUAL LIFE

- About one quarter of Jewish households in Howard County, 24%, belong to a Jewish congregation or prayer community of some type. This includes synagogues, Chabad, and independent minyans.
- Fourteen percent of households belong to a congregation in Howard County, and 10% belong to a congregation elsewhere (primarily another county in Maryland).
- Eleven percent of households pay dues to a "brick-and-mortar" synagogue.
- Nearly two thirds, 65%, of Jewish adults attended services at least once in the past year, and 14% attended services at least monthly. High Holiday services were attended by 39% of Jewish adults.
- Lighting Hanukkah candles is the mostly widely observed holiday or ritual activity; 76% of Jewish adults engage in this activity in a typical year. Sixty-nine percent of Jewish adults attend Passover seders in a typical year, and 59% of Jewish adults fast on a typical Yom Kippur. Shabbat, marked by special meals (39%) and lighting candles (30%), is less widely observed than are annual holidays.

SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY LIFE

- Seven percent of Jewish households report that they belong to a local Jewish organization other than a synagogue or a JCC. In addition to formal membership organizations, 8% of Jewish households say they belong to an informal or grassroots group in Howard County, such as a Jewish book club.
- Almost half, 49%, of Howard County Jewish adults read material from at least one local Jewish organization in the past year, and 36% attended at least one Jewish-sponsored program, activity, or class in Howard County. Twenty-four percent participated in activities at the Jewish Federation of Howard County, 14% were involved in a program at the JCC of Greater Baltimore, and 9% attended a local Chabad program or service.

- Thirty-two percent of Jewish adults say they engaged in some volunteer activity in the past month, including 27% who volunteered for a local non-Jewish organization and 10% who volunteered for a local Jewish organization.
- Within the Howard County Jewish community, 86% of households report making a charitable contribution in the past year. Almost two thirds (66%) gave to at least one Jewish organization, representing 75% of donor households.
- For 49% of Jewish adults in Howard County, one key impediment to a stronger relationship with the Jewish community is a lack of interest in program offerings. For a similar proportion, 47%, one obstacle is not feeling comfortable in their level of Jewish knowledge. For 45%, not knowing enough people at Jewish organizations and programs is a barrier.
- The vast majority (93%) of Jews in Howard County have at least some close Jewish friends, and 17% report that most or all of their closest friends are Jewish.
- Seventy-eight percent of Jewish adults discussed Jewish topics in the past year, and the same proportion engaged in a Jewish cultural activity, such as attending Jewish theatre productions or reading Jewish books. Sixty percent of Jewish adults read a Jewish publication, including articles, magazines, and newsletters from a Jewish organization. More than half of Jewish adults (59%) read online Jewish content, such as websites, email newsletters, or social media posts, and 29% watched or listened to Jewish content online, such as a podcast or by “streaming” religious services.
- Antisemitism in Howard County is “very much” a concern to 12% of Jewish adults. Six percent say they personally encountered antisemitism in the past year.

CONNECTIONS TO ISRAEL

- Forty-two percent of Howard County’s Jewish adults have been to Israel at least once, including 4% who have lived there.
- Sixty-seven percent of Jewish adults feel at least “a little” connected to Israel, and 21% feel “very connected.”
- Sixty-six percent of Howard County Jewish adults sought out news about Israel in the past month, including 27% who did so once a week or more.
- Nearly all respondents view Israel as a homeland for Jews throughout the world (90%). Over half of Jewish adults, 56%, see Israel as a source of pride, and 53% agree that the country is a lively democratic society. However, the Howard County Jewish community is not without its political disagreements with Israel. Thirty-nine percent of Jewish adults view Israel as a religious fundamentalist society, and only 24% believe Israel is a defender of gender equality.
- The majority of Jewish adults, 74%, feel at least a little comfortable discussing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and 28% feel very much comfortable doing so.

FINANCIAL WELL-BEING AND HEALTH NEEDS

- Seventy-five percent of Jewish adults in Howard County have earned at least a bachelor's degree, including 56% with at least one post-graduate degree. Within the general Howard County population, 61% of individuals ages 25 or older have at least a bachelor's degree, including 31% who have a graduate degree.
- Seventy-nine percent of Jewish adults in Howard County are working, either full time (71%) or part time (8%). An additional 18% of the population is retired.
- Nine percent of the community describe themselves as "prosperous" and just over one third (34%) say they are "living very comfortably" (Table 8.1). Those who say they are "living reasonably comfortably" make up 49% of Jewish households. But 8% say they are "just getting along," a possible indication of economic vulnerability, and less than 1% say they are "nearly poor."
- Thirty-five percent of all households are not confident in their ability to live comfortably during retirement. Eighteen percent of households do not have enough funds to cover three months of expenses were they to face an unexpected loss of income. Five percent could not cover a \$400 expense in full.
- Financial barriers, such as synagogue dues, program fees, and Jewish education costs, present a barrier to fully participating in Jewish life for 6% of Jewish households.
- Twenty-seven percent of Jewish households in Howard County include at least one person who is limited by some sort of health issue, special need, or disability. In 10% of households, the health issue limits the ability to work or attend school.
- Nine percent of Jewish households include someone with a chronic illness, and 5% include a member with a physical disability.
- Fourteen percent of Jewish households serve as primary caregivers for a relative, separate from routine childcare.
- Four percent of senior citizens are at least somewhat limited with the transportation needed to go about their daily lives. Isolation is a problem for the 22% of senior citizens who are dissatisfied with the amount of time they spend with friends and family.
- Five percent of households include someone who, in the past year, was constrained by health issues from participating in the Howard County Jewish community.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The 2019 Howard County 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 Federation of Howard County and The Associated: Jewish Federation of Baltimore, employed innovative state-of-the-art methods to create a comprehensive portrait of the characteristics, attitudes, and behaviors of present-day Howard County Jewry. The Pew Research Center's 2013 study, *A Portrait of Jewish Americans*, galvanized discussions in the US Jewish community on a host of topics: growing and shrinking sub-populations, declining affiliation in traditional institutions as well as new forms of Jewish engagement, the rise of both secular and Orthodox Jews, and the impact of intermarriage on community growth.² With the Pew study and the related national discourse as a backdrop, the Howard County Jewish Community Study seeks to describe the current dynamics of its population.

The principal goal of this study is to provide valid data about the Howard County 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 seeks 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

The Howard County Jewish Community Study provides a snapshot of today's Howard County population and considers trends and developments that diverge from those of the past.

HISTORY

The present study is the latest in a succession of occasional studies about the Howard County Jewish community, typically conducted in conjunction with studies of the Baltimore Jewish community. The first study that was regarded as “scientific” and that provided enough information to distinguish the Jewish population of Howard County from that of the Baltimore Jewish community was conducted in 1985; it reported an estimated 6,100 Jews living in about 2,500 households in Howard County. The most recent demographic study, in 2010, found 17,200 Jews in 7,500 households. All reports on previous studies can be found at the Berman Jewish Data Bank, <<http://www.jewishdatabank.org/studies/us-local-communities.cfm>>.

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 2019 Howard County Jewish Community Study is based on data collected through telephone and internet surveys from April to July 2019 from a total of 915 Jewish households residing for at least part of the year in the county. The response rate for the primary sample was 35.4%.

Households invited for 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 community, additional information was used to develop the estimates of population size and characteristics reported in this study.

The population size and basic demographic characteristics were estimated 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 that are conducted by government agencies and other organizations that include information about religion. The synthesis combines data from hundreds of surveys and uses information collected from Howard County residents to estimate the Jewish population in the region. See ajpp.brandeis.edu for more information about this approach to Jewish population estimates.

In all studies of members 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 validate all results against known benchmarks of community participation and adjust 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 his/her 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 derived 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, but other confidence levels are used where appropriate. (See Appendix A for details about the magnitude of the confidence intervals around estimates in this study.)

When size estimates of subpopulations (e.g., households with children) 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 D, for the actual number of responses to each question.

Some tables and figures that present proportions do not add up to 100%. In some cases, this is a result of respondents having the option to select more than one response to a question; in such cases, the text of the report will indicate 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.

For simplicity, in some tables not all groups will be shown. For example, if a table includes the proportion of a group who participated in a Passover seder, the proportion who did not participate will not appear. When a percentage is between 0% and 0.5% and would otherwise round down to 0%, the number is denoted as < 1. In some cases, there were insufficient respondents to provide reliable estimates. In those cases, the table entry shows “--”.

Some tables report on proportions of households, and others report proportions of adults or Jewish adults. This category is always indicated on the top row of the table. When tables report on households, the Jewish engagement group is that of the Jewish respondent for the household. Age is set at the age of the head of household (typically the oldest married Jewish person if there is one; otherwise it is the respondent’s age.)

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 were not offered to each respondent, it would be misleading to report the weighted proportion of responses to these questions. Instead, we report the total number of responses that mentioned a particular code or theme. This number appears in parentheses after the response without a percent sign, or in tables labeled as “n” or number of responses. In most cases sample quotes are also reported, with identifying information removed and edited for clarity.

COMPARISONS ACROSS SURVEYS

As part of the goal to assess trends, comparisons of answers to a number of questions are made to data from national studies (in particular, Pew’s 2013 *A Portrait of Jewish Americans*³). All comparisons to the United States Jewish population are based on data drawn from the Pew study. Although these analyses are informative, because of methodological differences, comparisons across studies are less precise and reliable than the data from the present study alone.

REPORT OVERVIEW

This report presents key findings about the Howard County 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 Howard County Jewish community and discusses changes in the Jewish population size and characteristics since 2010.

Chapter 3. Patterns of Jewish Engagement

This chapter describes the multifaceted ways in which the Jews of Howard County 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.

Chapters 4. Jewish Children

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

Chapters 5. Synagogue and Ritual Life

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

Chapters 6. Social and Community Life

This chapter discusses membership and involvement in organizational, social, and personal Jewish life as well as volunteering and philanthropy.

Chapters 7. Israel

This chapter describes frequency and types of travel to Israel and other markers of Israel connection.

Chapter 8. Financial Well-Being, Health, and Special Needs

This chapter examines the living conditions of Howard County Jewish households, in particular with regard to economic well-being, economic hardship, and health and social service concerns.

Chapter 9. In the Words of Community Members

The concluding chapter uses comments from survey respondents to summarize key findings of the study and make recommendations for the future.

REPORT APPENDICES

The appendices, available in a separate document, include:

Appendix A. Methodological Appendix

Details of data collection and analysis

Appendix B. Comparison Charts

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

Appendix C. Latent Class Analysis

Details of the latent class analysis method that was used to develop the Index of Jewish engagement

Appendix D. Survey Instrument and Codebook

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

Appendix E. Study Documentation

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

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CHAPTER 2

DEMOGRAPHIC SNAPSHOT

JEWSH POPULATION ESTIMATE

Understanding the character, behavior, and attitudes of members of the Howard County Jewish community requires knowledge of the size, geographic distribution, and basic socio-demographic characteristics of the community. The ways in which members of Jewish households identify and engage with Judaism and the community all vary significantly based upon who they are, where they live, their household composition, their ages, and their Jewish backgrounds. This demographic overview describes the size of the community and the basic characteristics of community members.

The 2019 community study estimates that the Howard County Jewish community numbers approximately 24,900 adults and children living in 9,100 Jewish households. These households include 18,700 Jewish individuals (see below for definitions).

The Howard County Jewish Community Population Estimates, 2019

Total people in Jewish households	24,900
Total Jewish households	9,100
Total Jews	18,700
Adults	
Jewish	14,900
Non-Jewish	5,100
Children	
Jewish	3,900
Non-Jewish	1,000

Howard County's total population (as of 2018, the most recent data available) is about 323,200 people. Approximately 5.7% of the residents of the county are Jewish, compared to the 2.2% share of the Jewish population of the United States. From 2010 to 2018, the county's population grew by 13%, but the Jewish population grew only by 9% (2010-19). This trend more closely matches the growth in the non-Hispanic white college-educated population ages 25 and older (considered a more appropriate comparison),⁴ which increased across the area by approximately 7% between 2010 and 2017.⁵

JEWISH ADULTS

Estimates of the size of the Jewish population rest on a set of fundamental questions about who is counted as Jewish for the purposes of the study. Recent surveys, such as the Pew Research Center's 2013 study, *A Portrait of Jewish Americans*, classify respondents according to their responses to a series of screening questions: What is your religion? 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, Jews have been categorized as “Jews by religion” (JBR)—if they

DEFINITIONS

Jewish households are households that include at least one Jewish adult.

Jewish adults are those who say they are currently Jewish and either have at least one Jewish parent, were raised Jewish, or converted to Judaism. They include three groups:

Jewish by religion (JBR): Indicate their religion is Jewish.

Jews of no religion (JNR): Indicate they have no religion but are ethnically or culturally Jewish.

Jews of multiple religions (JMR): Either they consider themselves having two religions, Jewish and another religion, or they have another religion but also consider themselves ethnically or culturally Jewish.

Non-Jewish adults include three groups:

Jewish background: Those who report that they had a Jewish parent or were raised Jewish, but do not consider themselves currently Jewish in any way.

Jewish affinity: Those who consider themselves Jewish but were not born to Jewish parents, were not raised Jewish, and did not convert. Many in this group are married to Jewish adults.

Not Jewish: Do not consider themselves Jewish and have no Jewish background.

Jewish children are classified based on how they are being raised by their parents.

Jewish by religion (JBR): Parents say they are raising their children Jewish by religion.

Jews of no religion (JNR): Parents say they are raising their children culturally Jewish.

Jews of multiple religions (JMR): Parents say they are raising their children as Jewish and another religion.

Non-Jewish children are children being raised with no religion or a religion other than Judaism, or whose parents have not yet decided on a religion.

No religion: Parents say they are raising their children with no religion.

Not yet decided: Parents say they have not yet decided how they will raise their children in terms of religion. This response is most commonly provided for children who are too young to enroll in religious education.

Another religion: Parents say they are raising their children in a religion other than Judaism.

respond to a question about religion by stating that they are solely Jewish—and “Jews of no religion” (JNR)—if their religion is not Judaism, 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 Howard County’s Jewish community could be compared to the population nationwide, a variant of Pew’s scheme was employed, supplemented by several other measures of identity. Included in the Jewish population are those adults who indicate they are Jewish and another religion; we refer to this category as “Jews of multiple religions” (JMR).

A total of 24,900 individuals,⁶ including adults and children, reside in Jewish households (Table 2.1). This total includes 14,900 Jewish adults and 3,900 Jewish children as well as 5,100 non-Jewish adults and 1,000 non-Jewish children.

PEOPLE IN JEWISH HOUSEHOLDS

For the purposes of this study, all adults and children in Jewish households have been classified according to their Jewish identity (see box on previous page for definitions). Among Jewish adults in Howard County, 79% (11,700 individuals) identify as Jewish by religion (JBR; Table 2.2). This proportion is similar to that of the overall United States Jewish population as reported by Pew (78%).⁸ Of the remaining Jewish adults, 18% (2,300 individuals) identify as Jews of no religion (JNR), and 4% (900 individuals) identify as Jews of multiple religions (JMR).⁹

Table 2.1. Jewish population of Howard County, summary (rounded to nearest 100)

	2019	2010 ⁷	Change 2010 to 2019
Households with at least one Jewish adult	9,100	7,500	21%
Total Jewish adults and children	18,700	17,200	9%
Total people in Jewish households	24,900	20,400	22%

Table 2.2. Jewish population of Howard County, detail (rounded to nearest 100; sums may not add up to total due to rounding)

Jewish adults	14,900
JBR adults	11,700
JNR adults	2,300
JMR adults	900
Non-Jewish persons in Jewish households	5,100
Jewish background	300
Jewish affinity	500
Not Jewish	4,300
Jewish children in Jewish households	3,900
JBR children	2,200
JNR children	1,300
JMR children	400
Non-Jewish children in Jewish households	1,000
No religion	800
Not yet decided	< 100
Other religion	200

AGE AND GENDER COMPOSITION

The age structure of the Howard County Jewish community is similar to that of the US Jewish community as a whole (Table 2.3). The mean and median age of Jewish adults in Howard County is 50, equivalent to the national Jewish population.¹⁰

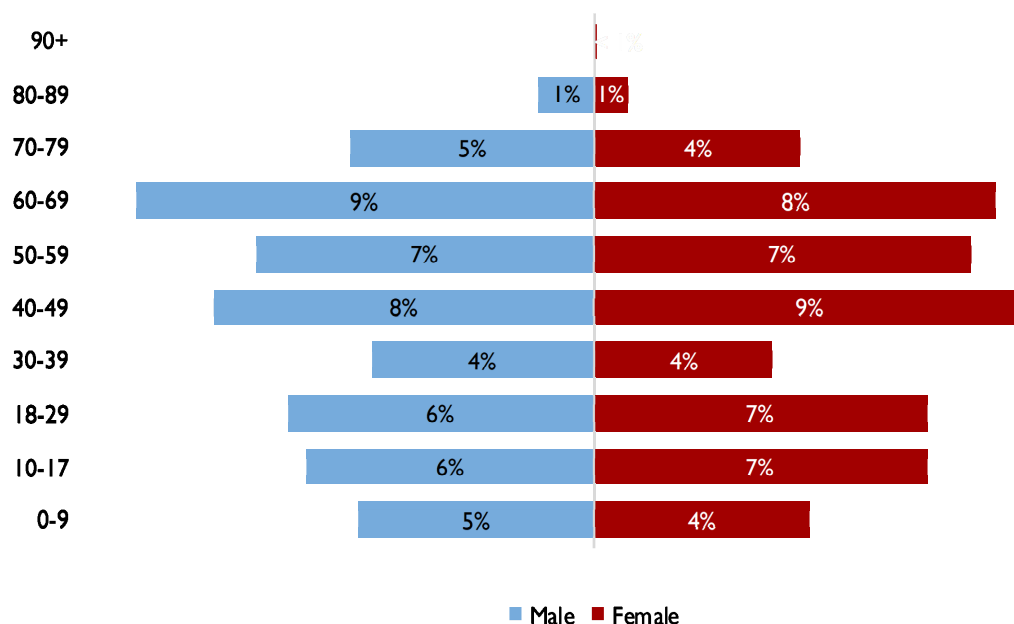
Including children in the analysis lowers the mean age. The mean age of all Howard County Jewish individuals is 42 and the median is 45.

Table 2.3. Age of Jewish adults in Howard County 2019

	Howard County 2019 (%)	US Jewish Community (%)
Age 18-44	35	41
Age 45-64	40	35
Age 65 +	25	24

The age-gender pyramid shows the distribution of Jews in Howard County (Figure 2.1). The largest shares are individuals between ages 40-49 or from ages 60-69. Overall, the Jewish community has more males than females (51% and 49%, respectively), with less than 1% of adults identifying as a gender other than male or female.

Figure 2.1. Age-gender distribution of Jews in Howard County



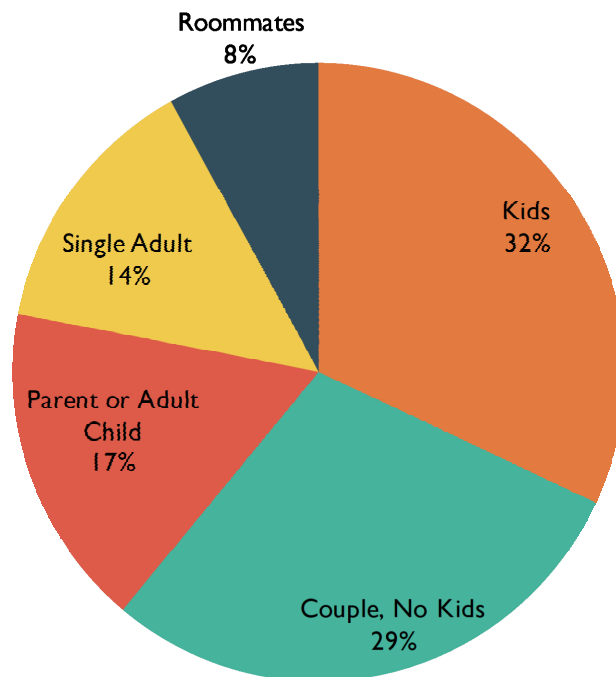
HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION

Households with children under age 18 (including single-parent, two-parent, or multigenerational households) make up 32% of Jewish households in Howard County (Figure 2.2). The mean household size is 2.7 individuals. Among households with children, the mean number of children ages 17 and younger is 1.7.

Couples without children constitute 29% of households, and 14% of households include an adult living alone. Multigenerational households, constituting 17% of households, are defined as parents and adult children of any age living together. This category can include adults who are living with children in their 20s or adults living with a parent in their 80s. Among households in which a single adult resides, 96% are younger than age 45.

Nine percent of Jews in Howard County have adult children who live in a different household in the county. Among Jews younger than age 75, 19% have parents in another Howard County household.

Figure 2.2. Household composition



RESIDENCY AND LENGTH OF RESIDENCE

Jewish households in Howard County are concentrated in and around Columbia and Ellicott City (Figure 2.3).

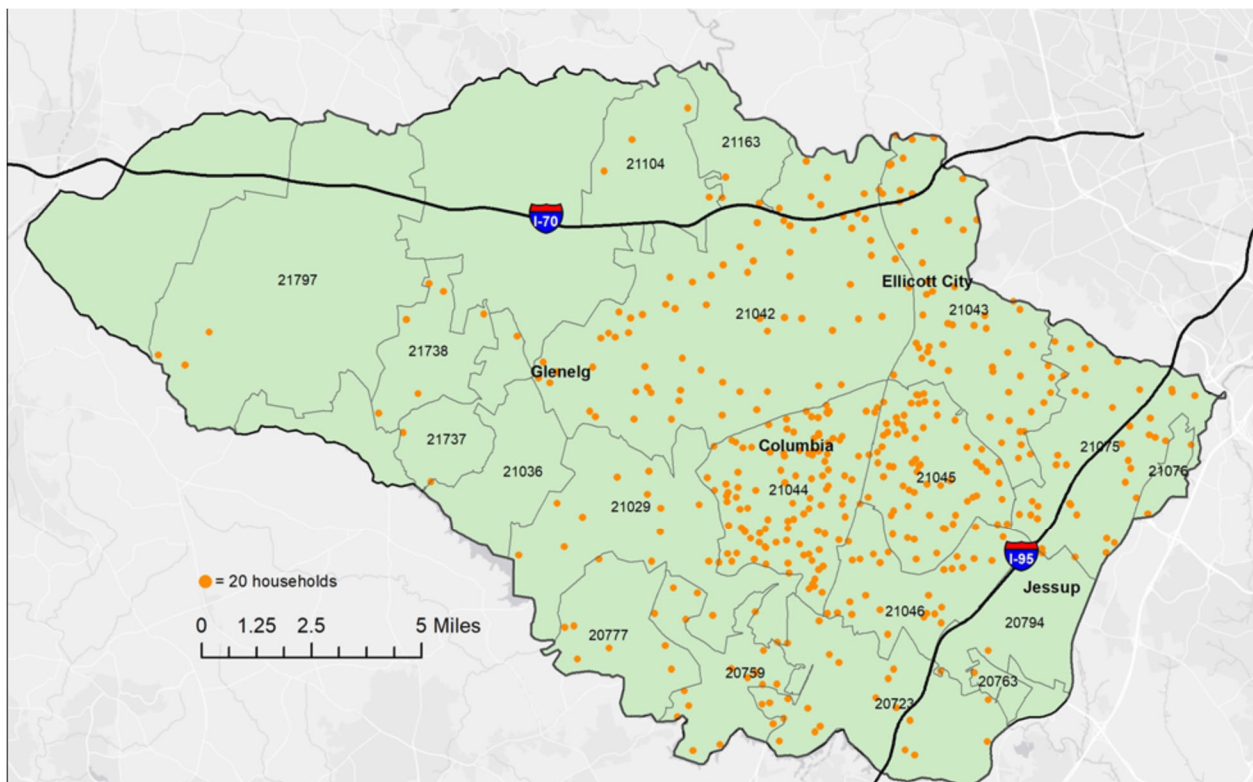
Most of the adult Jews in Howard County were raised somewhere else; 81% grew up in other parts of the United States, 10% were raised overseas, and 9% grew up in Howard County or the Greater Baltimore area.

Among the Jewish adults who were not raised in the area, nearly half, 45%, have lived in Howard County for at least 20 years. By contrast, one quarter of the Jewish population has been in the area for fewer than five years.

Consistent with the high levels of real estate development in recent years, 58% of households did not live in Howard County before moving there. Among those households, however, the majority lived nearby. Thirty-five percent moved to Howard County from the Baltimore area, and 38% moved from the DC area.

Most Jewish residents of Howard County, 88%, are homeowners.

Figure 2.3. Dot density map of Jewish households



JEWISH DENOMINATIONS

Denominational affiliation has historically been one of the primary indicators of Jewish identity and practice. While there are very few Jews in Howard County who identify as Orthodox, there are roughly equal shares of Jews who identify with the other major denominations, Conservative (18%) and Reform (17%). Among the 22% who identify with another denomination are 9% who identify as Reconstructionist. Those who indicate they are secular, just Jewish, or have no specific denomination constitute 42% of Jewish adults (Table 2.4).

Table 2.4. Age by denomination of Jewish adults

	Overall (%)	Ages 18-44 (%)	Ages 45-64 (%)	Ages 65 + (%)
Orthodox	1	1	1	1
Conservative	18	9	27	19
Reform	17	18	18	17
Other	22	31	16	8
None	42	42	39	56
Secular/cultural	30	30	28	34
Just Jewish	14	11	11	22
Total	100	100	100	100

INMARRIAGE AND INTERMARRIAGE

Among all Jewish households in Howard County, 73% include a couple who is married, engaged, or partnered. Of these couples, 48% are inmarried and 52% are intermarried. Five percent of couples in Howard County include someone who converted to Judaism.

The individual intermarriage rate (i.e., the proportion of married Jewish adults with a non-Jewish spouse) is 35%, lower than the national intermarriage rate of 44%. Regarding individual Jewish adults (Table 2.10), 79% currently have a spouse or partner with whom they live. Because social norms among those who are less religiously observant trend toward delayed marriage, it can be expected that, as more of the younger adults marry, the intermarriage rate among this age cohort will increase.

Inmarriage and intermarriage definitions

Inmarried couples include two partners who are currently Jewish, regardless of whether they were born Jewish or converted.

Intermarried couples include one partner who is currently Jewish and one partner who is not.

Table 2.5. Age of Jewish respondent by inmarriage (includes engaged couples and partners who live together)

	Overall (%)	Ages 18-44 (%)	Ages 45-64 (%)	Ages 65 + (%)
Married/ partnered Jewish adults	79	61	94	81
Inmarried	65	50	73	66
Intermarried	35	50	27	34
Total	100	100	100	100

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CHAPTER 3

PATTERNS OF JEWISH ENGAGEMENT

Just as Howard County’s Jewish community is diverse demographically, so too are there a variety of ways in which its members engage in Jewish life. Examining the means by which Jewish adults not only view, but also enact their Jewish identities can serve as a valuable lens through which to understand the population and the ways in which Jewish life in the region can be enhanced. This chapter presents a typology of patterns of Jewish engagement referred to as the “Index of Jewish Engagement,” created uniquely for the Howard County Jewish community.

One of the purposes of this Index is to serve as a single metric representing the full range of participation in Jewish life. Throughout the remainder of this report, we present data about individual measures of Jewish engagement, such as synagogue membership or program participation. A review of all of these individual measures does not reveal the relationships among them. For example, some subgroups have high levels of participation in ritual behavior but lower participation in communal behavior, and other subgroups have the opposite pattern. How can these subgroups be compared to one another? The Index presented in this chapter consolidates many of the individual measures so that the pattern of relationships among the behaviors can be identified. In addition, the Index creates the opportunity for behavior-based market segmentation. Each group can be considered separately for identifying interests and unmet needs that will guide the development of targeted programs and initiatives.

In the Howard County Jewish community, we have identified four categories of Jewish engagement that describe patterns of participation in Jewish life. This chapter explains how these categories were created and describes the most prevalent Jewish behaviors and attitudes in each grouping.

BACKGROUND: CLASSIFICATIONS OF JEWISH IDENTITY

The best-known system to categorize Jewish identity is denominational affiliations. Jewish denominational categories, at least in the past, closely correlated with measures of Jewish engagement, including behaviors and attitudes.

However, because these labels are self-assigned, their meaning varies from one individual to another. An increasing number of Jews also do not affiliate with any specific denomination (30% of US Jews in 2013). Thus, denominational labels are limited in their ability to convey Jewish behavior and attitudes.

INDEX OF JEWISH ENGAGEMENT

We specifically designed the Index of Jewish Engagement to identify opportunities for increased engagement for groups with different needs and interests.

The Index focuses on behaviors—the ways in which individuals occupy and involve themselves in Jewish life. Such behaviors are concrete and measurable expressions of Jewish identity. Behaviors, in many cases, are correlated with demographic characteristics, background, 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 skills 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 the typology are inclusive of the different 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: family and home-based practices, ritual practices, personal activities, and organizational participation. The behavioral measures include:

- **Family holiday celebrations:** Participating in a Passover seder and lighting Hanukkah candles. (Family holiday celebrations 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 can be practiced at home without institutional affiliation.)
- **Ritual practices:** Keeping kosher, lighting Shabbat candles or having a Shabbat dinner, attending religious services, attending High Holiday services, fasting on Yom Kippur.
- **Communal activities:** Belonging to a synagogue, belonging to a Jewish organization or group, attending Jewish activities, volunteering for Jewish organizations, donating to Jewish causes.
- **Personal activities:** Engaging in cultural activities (book, music, TV, museum), following news about Israel, accessing Jewish content online (websites, podcasts, etc.), reading Jewish organization’s material.

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 five primary patterns of behavior that are presented here. Survey respondents were *not* asked to assign themselves to the groups.

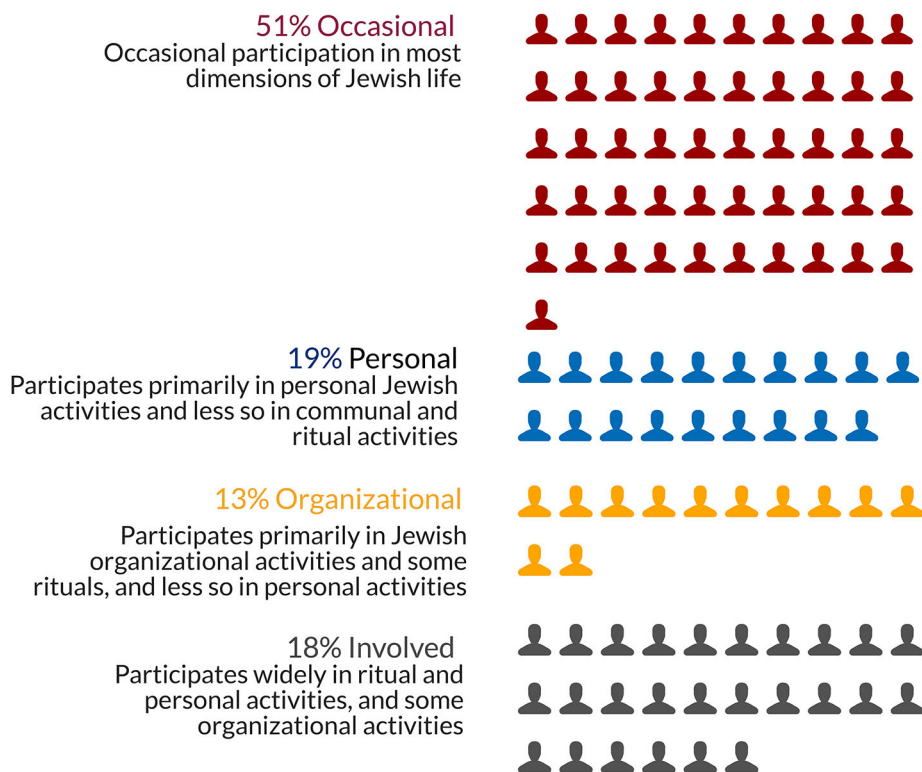
The LCA analysis presented here is unique to the Howard County Jewish community. Both the set of classifications and their names are derived directly from data collected for this study.

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.

PATTERNS OF JEWISH ENGAGEMENT

Jewish adults of Howard County can be clustered into one of four groups, each with similar patterns of behavior. The patterns are summarized in Figure 3.1 and described below. Table 3.1 shows, for each pattern, the level of participation in each of the 17 behaviors that were used to construct the Index of Jewish Engagement. As shown in Figure 3.1, the groups vary widely in size.

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

The highest level of engagement is found in the 18% of Jewish adults who are in the **“Involved”** group. Almost all of the listed behaviors are practiced by nearly everyone in that group. On the other end of the scale, the lowest level of engagement is found in the 51% who are included in the **“Occasional”** group. None of its constituents are members of a synagogue, and only 2% observe Shabbat often or frequently by lighting candles or attending a Shabbat dinner. The 13% of Jewish adults in the **“Organizational”** group are similar to the Involved group, but fewer of them engage in personal activities and less frequently in ritual ones. However, the Organizational group is more likely to be engaged in Jewish organizational life, whether as a synagogue member or through donations to a Jewish organization.

The 19% of Jewish adults in the remaining **“Personal”** group have moderate levels of Jewish engagement. They participate to a high degree in activities that can be done individually, such as reading Jewish books and discussing Jewish topics.

Table 3.1. Jewish behaviors and Jewish engagement

	Occasional (%)	Personal (%)	Organizational (%)	Involved (%)
% of Jewish adults	51	19	13	18
Family holidays				
Attended seder	49	75	100	100
Lit Hanukkah candles	57	90	99	100
Ritual practices				
Attended services monthly or more	0	2	32	57
Attended High Holiday services	6	33	97	100
Fasted on Yom Kippur (not including those who didn't fast for medical reasons)	43	46	92	81
Kosher at home/always	0	2	1	23
Shabbat candles or meal often/frequently	2	3	30	39
Communal activities				
Synagogue member	0	22	87	82
Member of other Jewish organization	1	12	3	39
Donated to Jewish charity (past year)	39	74	93	99
Volunteered for Jewish organization (past month)	2	5	24	28
Attended Jewish program (past year)	11	50	59	80
Personal activities				
Discuss Jewish topics	35	93	56	98
Watch online Jewish content	1	53	29	79
Read online Jewish content	18	66	9	90
Read Jewish publications	1	90	18	95
Engage in Jewish culture	11	57	27	86
Israel news	24	64	27	82

Legend	0-19%	20-39%	40-59%	60-79%	80-100%
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DEMOGRAPHICS AND JEWISH ENGAGEMENT

The patterns of engagement are associated with demographic characteristics of respondents. Tables 3.2 and 3.3 show the distribution of selected demographic characteristics within the Jewish engagement categories. To best understand demographic patterns, it is useful to compare the distribution of each demographic category within each engagement groups to that of the overall adult Jewish population, shown in the top row of each table. This comparison indicates where each engagement group differs from the overall population. See Appendix B for a table showing the distribution of engagement groups within each demographic characteristic (i.e., column totals rather than row totals).

There are some age differences across the engagement groups (Table 3.2). The Involved and Organizational groups include the largest proportion of individuals ages 45-64 (63% and 59%, respectively). Jews ages 18-44 comprise the largest share of adults in the Occasional group.

The Involved group has the largest share of married couples (95%; Table 3.3), and, among those who are married, the largest share who are inmarried (93%). Married couples in the Occasional group include the smallest share who are inmarried (44%). More than half (55%) of those in the Organizational group and nearly half (47%) of those in the Involved group have children, far more than in the other two engagement groups.

Table 3.2. Age by Jewish engagement

	Age 18-44 (%)	Age 45-64 (%)	Age 65 + (%)	Total (%)
All Jewish adults	35	41	24	100
Occasional	46	31	23	100
Personal	31	35	34	100
Organizational	26	59	15	100
Involved	16	63	22	100

Table 3.3. Marriage and children by Jewish engagement

	Married (%)	Inmarried (of married; %)	Has children (%)
All Jewish adults	79	65	33
Occasional	69	44	27
Personal	83	71	24
Organizational	93	79	55
Involved	95	93	47

JEWISH BACKGROUND AND JEWISH ENGAGEMENT

The following tables describe the Jewish identity and Jewish backgrounds of those in each Jewish engagement category. Tables 3.4 and 3.5 show the distribution of selected Jewish identity characteristics within each Jewish engagement category (row totals) in comparison to the overall Jewish adult population (first row). See Appendix B for a table showing the distribution of engagement groups within each demographic characteristic (i.e., column totals rather than row totals).

Jewish denomination corresponds closely to Jewish engagement but is not identical (Table 3.4). More than half of the Personal and Occasional groups (59% and 57%, respectively) have no specific denomination. The Involved group is the only group that has Orthodox members (6%), but there are also 14% of its constituents with no specific denomination.

Jewish backgrounds (Table 3.5) are associated with Jewish engagement in adulthood. Large majorities of all groups were raised by two Jewish parents. More than three quarters (80%) of all Jews had some Jewish schooling in childhood. In the Personal group, the group with smallest proportion of those who had a Jewish education, almost three quarters (74%) of its members had Jewish schooling as children.

Table 3.4. Denomination by Jewish engagement

Denomination	Orthodox (%)	Conservative (%)	Reform (%)	Other (%)	None (%)	Total (%)
All Jewish adults	1	18	18	19	44	100
Occasional	0	10	12	22	57	100
Personal	0	18	15	8	59	100
Organizational	0	25	38	22	14	100
Involved	6	38	21	20	14	100

Table 3.5. Jewish background by Jewish engagement

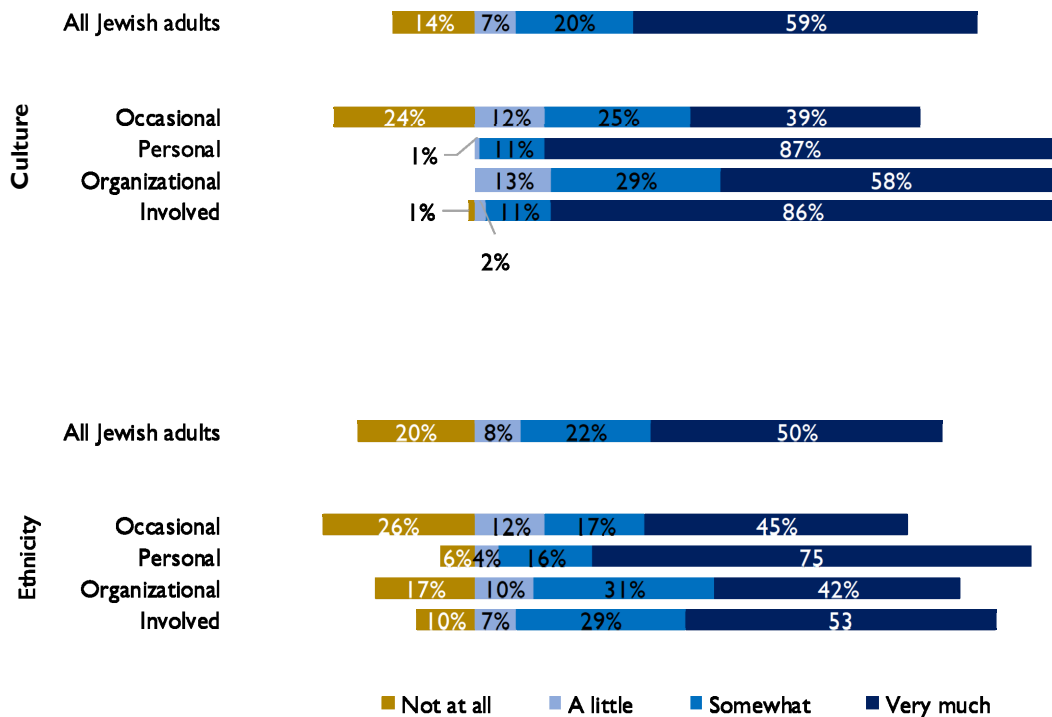
Jewish background	Parents inmarried (%)	Had Jewish education (%)
All Jewish adults	87	80
Occasional	84	77
Personal	88	74
Organizational	90	90
Involved	91	90

ATTITUDES ABOUT BEING JEWISH AND JEWISH ENGAGEMENT

Just as Jewish behaviors vary across the engagement groups, so too do attitudes about being Jewish. The figures below show responses to a set of attitudinal questions that illustrate the differences among the groups. As is evident from Figures 3.2, majorities of all groups consider Judaism to be a matter of culture, and, though to a lesser degree, in believing Judaism to be a matter of ethnicity. Interestingly, the Personal group has the highest share of people who think Judaism is a matter of culture and is a matter of ethnicity, with 87% and 75% saying it is “very much” a matter of culture and of ethnicity, respectively. In contrast, the shares of the Occasional group who think Judaism is a matter of culture and a matter of ethnicity are the smallest out of all the groups. Almost one quarter (24%) of Occasional members believe Judaism is not at all a matter of culture, and more than one quarter (26%) do not find ethnicity to be a defining quality of Judaism.

With respect to the religious aspects of Judaism (Figure 3.3), there are larger differences in the engagement groups. A large majority of the Involved group considers Judaism to be a matter of

Figure 3.2. Being Jewish is a matter of culture and ethnicity



religion (71% “very much”), along with 52% of the Organizational group. More than one quarter (28%) of the Occasional group and 18% of the Personal group say that Judaism is “not at all” a matter of religion.

With regard to the question of whether Judaism is part of daily life (Figure 3.4), there are clear differences among the engagement groups. Among the Involved Jews, 60% regard Judaism to be “very much” part of their daily life; among the Organizational almost half of that (31%) feel Judaism is “very much” part of daily life. For the Occasional members, 53% say Judaism is “not at all” part of their daily life, while only 3% believe it to be “very much” a part of their daily life.

Figure 3.3. Being Jewish is a matter of religion

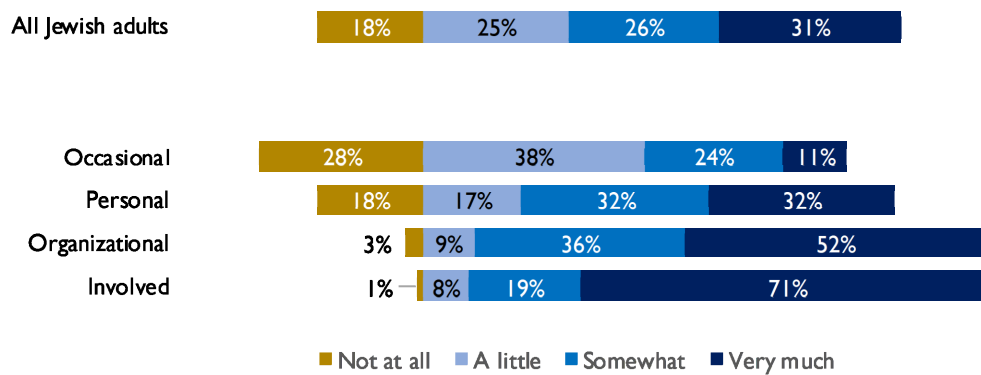
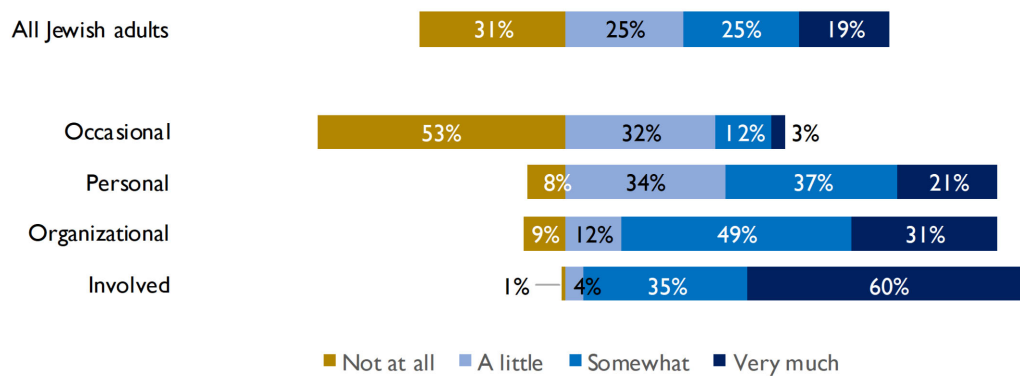


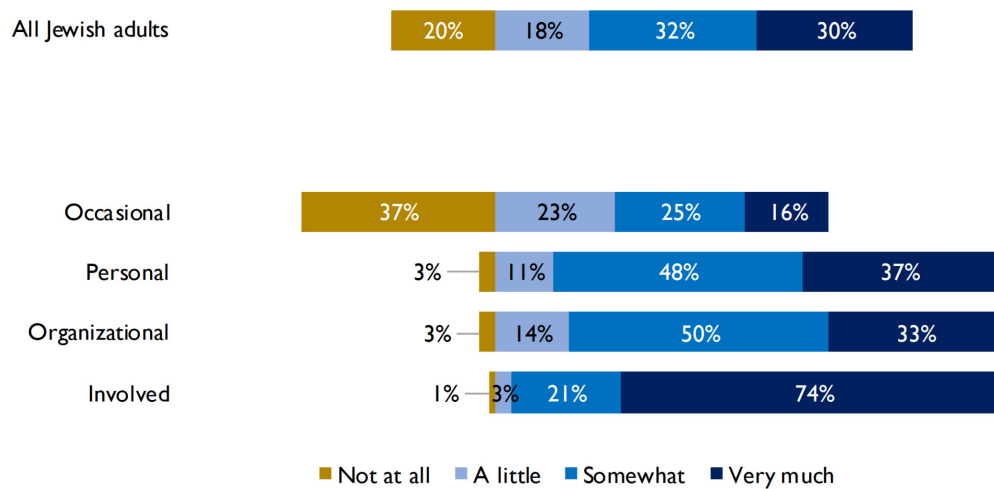
Figure 3.4. Being Jewish is part of daily life



ATTITUDES ABOUT JEWISH COMMUNITY

Respondents were asked in a variety of ways about Jewish community and its importance. Figure 3.5 displays the extent to which Jews in Howard County believe that being Jewish is a matter of community. One-in-five Jews in Howard County (20%) do not believe being Jewish is a matter of community. This feeling is reflected most strongly in the Occasional group, with more than one third (37%) of the members feeling that being Jewish is “not at all” a matter of community. Conversely, almost three quarters (74%) of the Involved group believe that being Jewish is “very much” a matter of community.

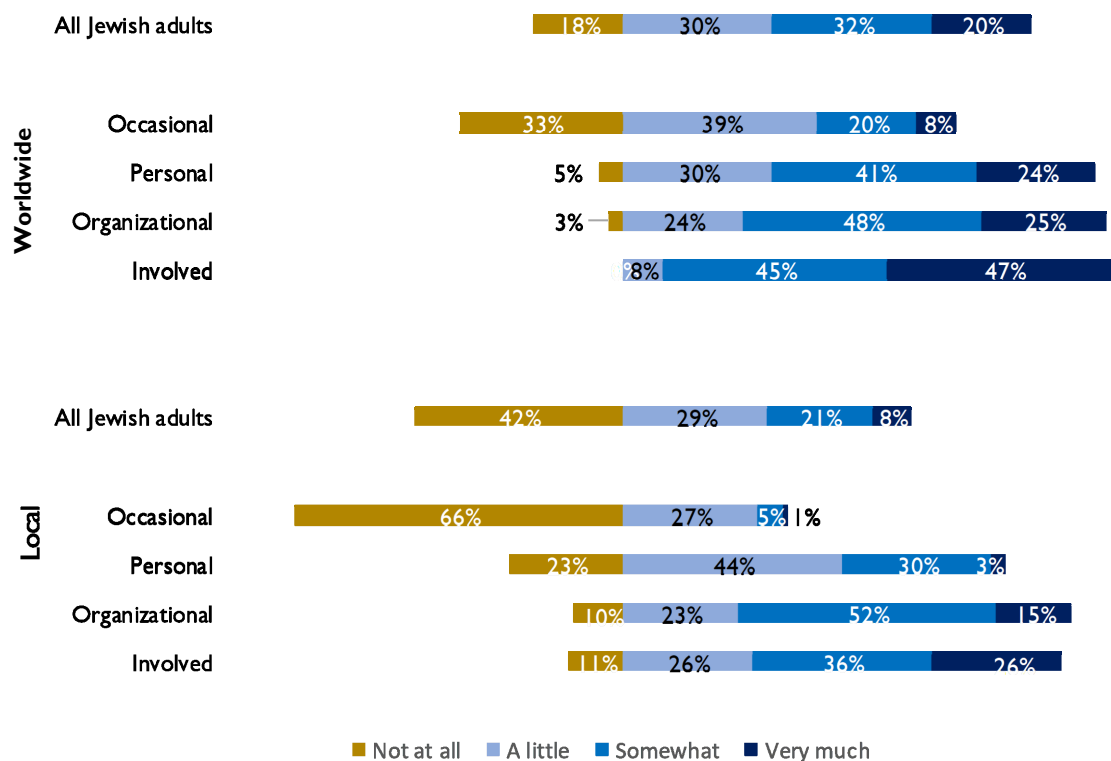
Figure 3.5. Being Jewish is a matter of community



Community connections vary widely across the engagement groups, but, in all cases, connection to the worldwide Jewish community exceeds connections to the local community (Figure 3.6). Among the Occasional Jews, one third do not feel at all connected to the worldwide Jewish community, but double that (66%) do not feel connected to the local Howard County Jewish community.

Conversely, all the Involved Jews feel at least a little connected to the worldwide Jewish community, but more than one in ten (11%) do not feel connected to their local Jewish community. The Organizational group has the highest share of members (90%) who feel at least a little connected to the local Jewish community.

Figure 3.6. Connections to local and worldwide Jewish community

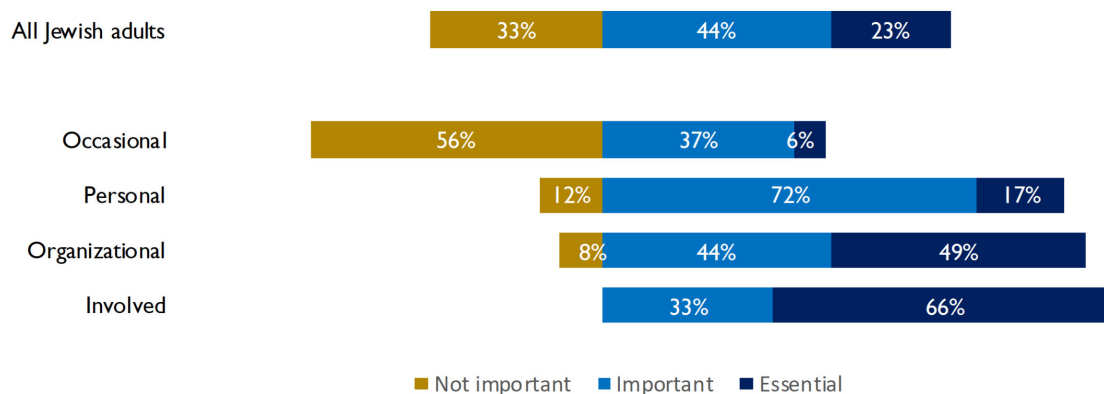


Finally, respondents were asked if being part of a Jewish community was essential to what it means to be Jewish (Figure 3.7). Notably, 42% of the Occasional group and 89% of the Personal group—the two engagement groups that participate in the fewest communal activities—say that it is at least a little important to be part of a Jewish community. This finding suggests that there may be opportunities for outreach within these groups.

ESSENTIALS OF BEING JEWISH

To further explore the meaning of being Jewish, respondents were asked about whether various aspects of Judaism were an essential part of being Jewish to them. In Figures 3.8, 3.9, and 3.10, these results are presented for each engagement group.

Figure 3.7. Essential to being Jewish: Part of a Jewish community

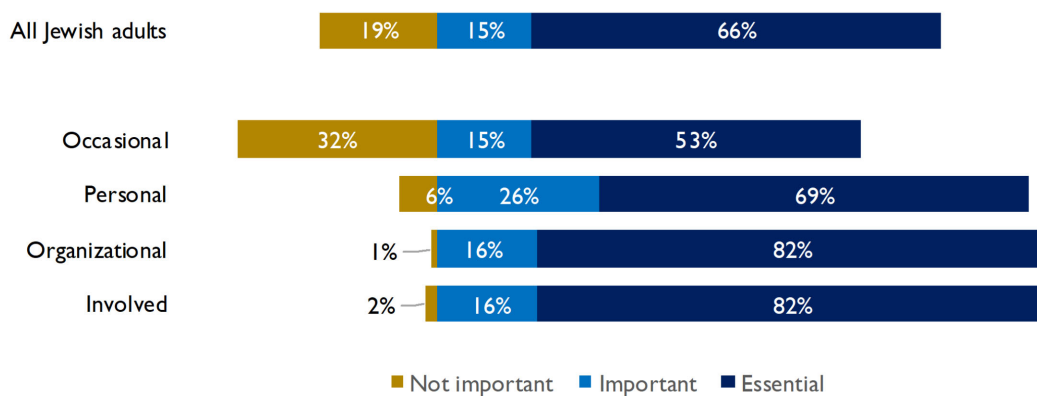


Question: How important is each of the following to what being Jewish means to you...Being part of a Jewish community?

For the two dimensions “Leading an ethical and moral life” (Figure 3.8) and “Working for justice and equality” (Figure 3.9), there is a mostly similar pattern among all groups, with belief in each dimension strongest among the most engaged groups and weakest among the least engaged. However, when it comes to seeing these dimensions as essential to being Jewish, the Organizational and Involved groups have an equal share (82%) of members who believe leading an ethical and moral life is essential to being Jewish. The Personal group has a larger share (54%) of those who feel justice and equality in society are essential compared to the Organizational group (43%).

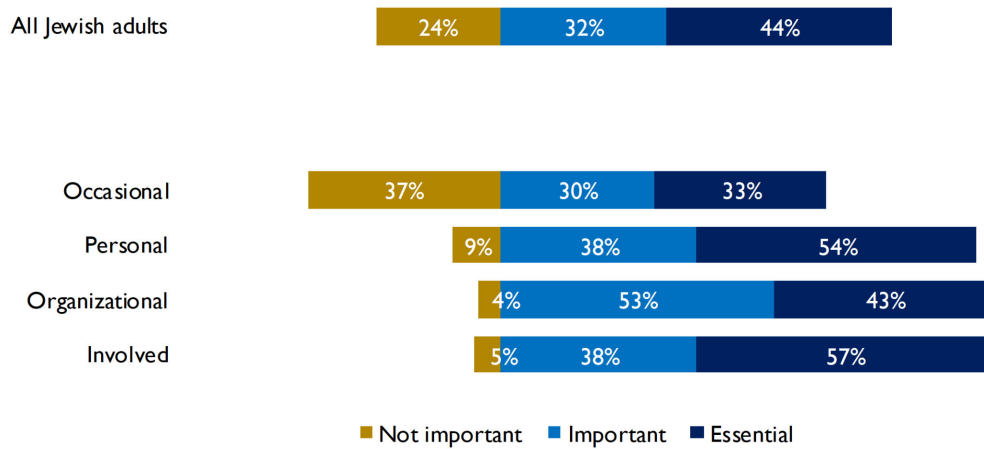
As would be expected, greater shares of groups that participate more frequently and more deeply in ritual Jewish practices responded that a belief in the divine or a higher power is essential to being Jewish (Figure 3.10). More than three quarters (78%) of the Involved group see that belief as at least important, while about more than two thirds of the Occasional (68%) and 44% of the Personal groups do not find a belief in the divine or a higher power as important.

Figure 3.8. Essential to being Jewish: Leading an ethical and moral life



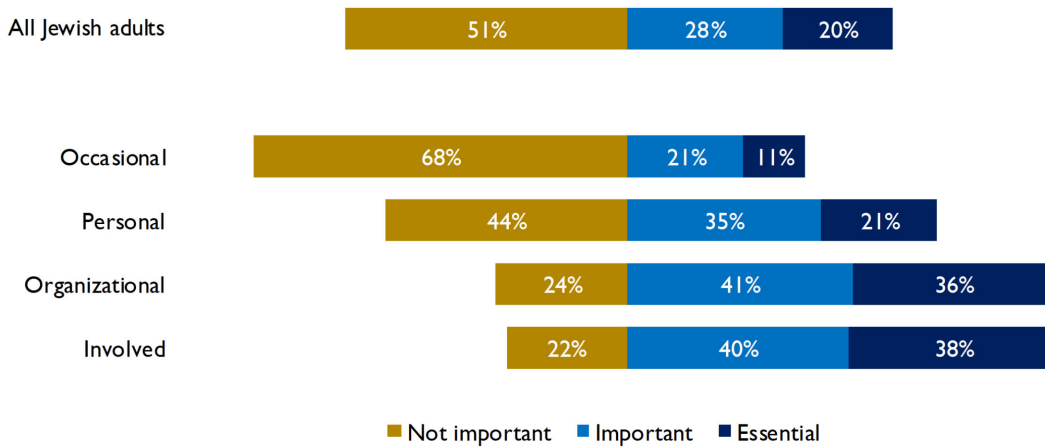
Question: How important is each of the following to what being Jewish means to you...Leading a moral and ethical life?

Figure 3.9. Essential to being Jewish: Working for justice and equality in society



Question: How important is each of the following to what being Jewish means to you...Working for justice and equality in society?

Figure 3.10. Essential to being Jewish: Belief in the divine or higher power



Question: How important is each of the following to what being Jewish means to you...Belief in a divine or higher power?

CHAPTER 4

JEWISH CHILDREN

This chapter focuses on the choices parents make about how to raise their children and how they take advantage—or not—of Jewish educational opportunities available in Howard County. The goal is to describe the landscape of educational programs, including Jewish preschools; formal Jewish education programs, both part-time and full-time; and informal Jewish education programs, including camp and youth groups.

JEWISH CHILDREN

Among the 4,900 children who live in Howard County Jewish households, 3,900 (79% of all children) are being raised Jewish in some way, either by religion, secularly or culturally, or as Jewish and another religion (Table 4.1). Among the remaining children, 800 are being raised without religion, 200 are being raised in another religion, and fewer than 100 have parents who have not yet decided how to raise them.

The age distribution of Jewish children skews younger, with 26% being under age six, compared to 10% of children not being raised Jewish (Table 4.2).

Table 4.1. Religion of minor children in Jewish households

	Number	All children (%)
Jewish by religion	2,200	44%
Secular/culturally Jewish	1,300	26%
Jewish and another religion	400	9%
No religion	800	17%
Another religion	200	3%
Undecided	< 100	1%
Total	4,900	100%

Table 4.2. Ages of minor children in Jewish households

	All children		Jewish children		Non-Jewish children	
	Number	Percentage (%)	Number	Percentage (%)	Number	Percentage (%)
0-5	1,100	23%	1,000	26%	100	10%
6-12	1,500	32%	1,100	28%	500	44%
13-17	2,200	45%	1,800	45%	500	45%
Total	4,900	100%	3,900	100%	1,100	100%

RELIGION OF CHILDREN BY HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS

Overall, 79% of children in Jewish households are being raised Jewish in some way: by religion, as secular/cultural Jews, or as Jewish and another religion. Virtually all inmarried parents are raising their children Jewish (Figure 4.1), and among children of intermarried parents, 71% are being raised Jewish in some way (Figure 4.2).

Figure 4.1. Religion raised, minor children of inmarriage

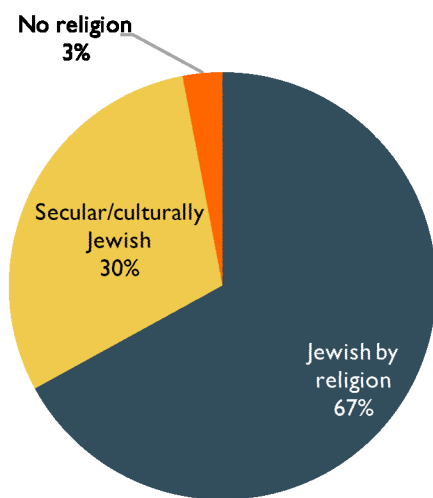
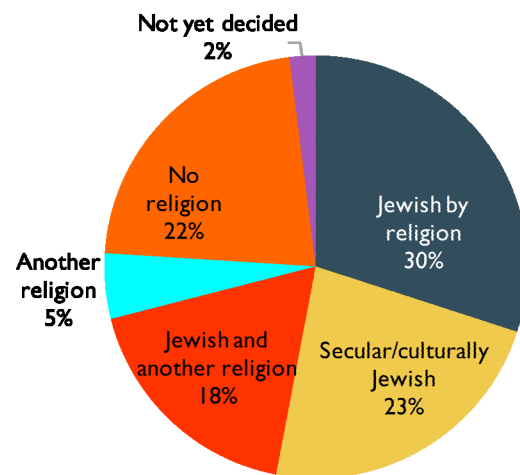


Figure 4.2. Religion raised, minor children of intermarriage



PARTICIPATION IN JEWISH EDUCATION

Jewish education occurs in the context of Jewish preschools; classroom settings, such as day schools and part-time supplementary schools; and informal settings, including camps, youth groups, and peer trips to Israel. Table 4.3 shows the overall numbers of children in each form of Jewish education within the past year. The tables also display the proportion of Jewish children who were enrolled, among Jewish children who are age-eligible to attend that form of Jewish education.

Unlike the tables and figures earlier in the chapter, which focused only on children who are not yet age 18, analysis of Jewish education includes adult children ages 18 and 19 who are still in high school.

Because the majority of children in Jewish education are being raised Jewish in some way, the analysis below is restricted to children being raised Jewish in some way.

Of Jewish children who are not yet in kindergarten, 20% were enrolled in a Jewish preschool program, and 16% of Jewish children in grades K-12 were enrolled in some form of Jewish school during the 2018-19 academic year. The lack of day schools in Howard County means that parents must commute into Baltimore or Montgomery County to access this option. As a result, very few children in Howard County attend day school.

Of Jewish children in grades K-12, 25% participated in at least one form of informal education. This share includes 9% who attended a day camp, 18% who attended an overnight camp, and 3% who participated in some form of Jewish private tutoring and classes. These lessons included activities such as bar or bat mitzvah tutoring or Hebrew language lessons. The 25% also includes those in grades 6-12 who are in a Jewish youth group.

Table 4.3. Household participation in Jewish education

	Any Jewish education, preschool or K-12 (%)	Any Jewish schooling, K-12 (%)	Any informal Jewish education, K-12 (%)
Jewish household with age-eligible children	27	13	20
Engagement group			
Occasional	12	3	10
Personal	36	10	27
Organizational	36	16	23
Involved	79	43	63
Marital status			
Inmarried	46	15	34
Intermarried	17	11	14
Not married	--	--	--

Thirty percent of all Jewish children not yet in college participated in some form of Jewish education. Among households with at least one child age 12 or younger, 49% receive books from PJ Library (not shown in table). Another 25% were unaware of the program.

Of Jewish children who have reached bar or bat mitzvah age, 53% have marked the occasion with a ceremony, and another 4% are expected to do so in the future.

CHAPTER 5

SYNAGOGUE AND RITUAL LIFE

Synagogues have long been the central communal and religious “home” for US Jews, and membership in a congregation is one of the key ways Jews affiliate with the Jewish community. Synagogue membership notwithstanding, many Jews participate in rituals on a regular or intermittent basis at home. Religious and ritual observance constitute one means by which Jews in Howard County express their Jewish identities.

SYNAGOGUES AND CONGREGATIONS

In Howard County, 24% of households (approximately 2,100) include someone who belongs to a synagogue or another Jewish worship community of some type (Table 5.1). Thirty percent of Jewish adults live in synagogue-member households, fewer than the rest of the country (39%).

Table 5.1. Synagogue membership

	Any synagogue member (%)	Local synagogue member (%)	Brick-and-mortar synagogue, ¹¹ pays dues (%)
All Jewish households	24	14	11
Engagement group			
Occasional	1	1	< 1
Personal	12	7	6
Organizational	79	51	49
Involved	78	50	46
Age			
18-44	11	5	4
45-64	33	20	18
75 +	22	16	14
Parent status			
No children in household	22	14	13
Children in household	28	16	15
Marital status			
Inmarried	42	25	23
Intermarried	15	10	8
Not married	13	10	8

Fourteen percent of households indicate that they belong to at least one congregation in Howard County. Eleven percent of households are dues-paying members to “brick-and-mortar” congregations in Howard County (see box below for definitions).

Synagogue membership is highest among those in the Organizational (79%) and Involved (78%) groups. Very few in the Occasional or Personal groups have joined a congregation. Households with adults ages 45-64 or older have higher membership rates than all other age groups. Inmarried households and households with children belong to congregations at higher rates than do their counterparts.

Synagogue affiliation models are no longer limited to “brick-and-mortar” synagogues with a paid dues structure. Organizations such as Chabad, independent minyanim and havurot, and High Holiday congregations have grown in popularity, and voluntary contributions have replaced dues in some congregations.¹²

CONGREGATION TYPES

“Brick-and-mortar” synagogue: Typically has its own building, a conventional dues/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.

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

High Holiday congregation: Meets only on the High Holidays.

Chabad: Typically has its own building, professional clergy, and programs or amenities commonly available in synagogues. Usually does not have a conventional dues/membership structure. Draws from across the denominational spectrum.

Among synagogue-member households, 38%, representing 10% of all households, belong to congregations outside of Howard County, primarily in the Baltimore area or Montgomery County (Table 5.2). The rate is highest among adults ages 18-44, suggesting that some also retain membership in congregations where they lived before coming to Howard County.

Another 8% of member households claim membership to local congregations but do not pay dues to them. Alternative congregational structures that Howard County households affiliate with include Chabad (2% of member households) and a *minyan* or *havurah* (1% of member households). One percent of local member households belong to multiple synagogues or worship groups (not shown in table).

Table 5.2. Household membership of congregations of different types

	Out-of-area synagogue member ¹³ (%)	Brick-and-mortar synagogue, no dues (%)	Chabad (%)	Independent minyan (%)
Synagogue-member households	38	8	2	1
Engagement group				
Occasional	--	--	--	--
Personal	38	8	0	0
Organizational	34	3	1	1
Involved	35	2	4	1
Age				
18-44	56	4	2	0
45-64	37	5	2	0
75 +	25	5	3	2
Parent status				
No children in household	32	5	3	1
Children in household	39	6	1	0
Marital status				
Inmarried	39	1	3	1
Intermarried	28	14	0	0
Not married	27	8	2	0

Among households that are members of local brick-and-mortar synagogues, 23% are members of Conservative congregations, 49% are members of Reform congregations, 26% are members of Reconstructionist synagogues, and 2% belong to a congregation of other denominations or no denomination (Table 5.3).

SYNAGOGUE PARTICIPATION

Table 5.3. Denomination of brick-and-mortar synagogue

	Brick-and-mortar synagogue households (%)¹⁴
Conservative	23
Reform	49
Reconstructionist	26
Other, no denomination	2

Sixty-five percent of Jewish adults attended services at least once in the past year, and 14% attended a service monthly or more (Table 5.4). Thirty-nine percent of Jewish adults attended High Holiday services. Nearly all synagogue members attended services, but 52% of non-members still attended at least once over the last year.

Table 5.4. Jewish religious services

	Attended services in past year (%)	Attended services monthly or more (%)	Attended High Holiday services (%)
All Jewish adults	65	14	39
Engagement group			
Occasional	41	0	6
Personal	73	2	33
Organizational	100	32	97
Involved	100	57	100
Age			
18-44	77	9	23
45-64	65	21	55
75 +	49	11	38
Parent status			
No children in household	64	9	31
Children in household	67	24	55
Marital status			
Inmarried	73	22	56
Intermarried	41	7	23
Not married	78	4	19
Synagogue member			
Member	99	45	87
Not member	52	2	20

RITUAL PRACTICES

The majority of Howard County Jewish adults mark Jewish holidays over the course of the year, with 76% attending a Passover seder and 69% lighting Hanukkah candles (Table 5.6). Passover and Hanukkah celebrations are nearly universal among the Involved and Organizational engagement groups but less frequent among members of the Occasional group. In contrast, Shabbat candle-lighting and Shabbat meal attendance are widespread among those in the Involved group but less frequent for all other groups. Over half of Jewish adults fasted on Yom Kippur (59%). Few members of the Occasional, Personal, and Organizational groups keep kosher at home, compared to 23% of the Involved group.

Table 5.5. Ritual practice

	Light Hanukkah candles in typical year (%)	Attend Passover seder in typical year (%)	Fasted on Yom Kippur* (%)	Ever have Shabbat meal in past year (%)	Ever light Shabbat candles in past year (%)	Keep kosher at home (%)
All Jewish adults	76	69	59	38	30	5
Engagement group						
Occasional	57	49	43	10	6	< 1
Personal	90	75	46	51	25	2
Organizational	99	100	92	58	62	1
Involved	100	100	81	88	86	23
Age						
18-44	61	54	58	34	18	3
45-64	94	86	66	46	45	6
75 +	71	65	40	31	25	4
Parent status						
No children in household	67	64	54	34	23	4
Children in household	94	81	61	46	46	6
Marital status						
Inmarried	97	92	64	56	46	8
Intermarried	72	59	34	16	16	1
Not married	31	29	71	23	10	2
Synagogue member						
Member	99	99	76	75	67	10
Not member	67	58	48	23	16	3

*In addition, 8% of Jewish adults could not fast due to medical reasons.

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CHAPTER 6

SOCIAL AND COMMUNAL LIFE

The Howard County Jewish community offers diverse avenues for communal participation. Jews join local, regional, and national membership organizations and attend an array of cultural, educational, and religious events. They volunteer and donate their time to Jewish and non-Jewish causes. Through their participation, they make Jewish friends and strengthen their ties to the local community.

Jewish life also includes informal or personal interactions with Jewish friends and community members. The vast majority of Jews in Howard County have at least some close Jewish friends, and more than one third (36%) say that at least half of their closest friends are Jewish. Consequently, there are many opportunities to talk about Jewish topics, eat Jewish foods, and participate in Jewish cultural activities alone or with friends.

This chapter describes the multiple ways in which Jews in Howard County interact and participate with their local peers and institutions and points to measures that can enhance these connections.

JEWISH ORGANIZATIONS AND PROGRAMS

Howard County Jews participate in a wide range of Jewish organizations and activities. Seven percent of Jewish households report they belong to a local Jewish organization other than a synagogue or a JCC (Table 6.1).¹⁵ In addition to formal membership organizations, 8% of Jewish households say they belong to an informal or grassroots group in Howard County, such as a Jewish book club.

Almost half (49%) of Howard County Jewish adults read material from at least one local Jewish organization in the past year, and 21% read this type of material at least once a month (Table 6.2). Thirty-six percent attended at least one Jewish-sponsored program, activity, or class in Howard County, and 6% did so at least once per month. Program attendance is higher among Jews who have children in their household than those who do not. Notably, inmarried couples read organization materials and attend programs at higher rates than intermarried or single Jewish adults.

Table 6.1. Household memberships

	Belong to Jewish organization (%)	Belong to informal Jewish group (%)
All Jewish households	7	8
Engagement group		
Occasional	< 1	3
Personal	9	7
Organizational	3	5
Involved	27	25
Ages		
18-44	4	3
45-64	9	12
65 +	6	7
Parent status		
No children in household	6	7
Children in household	8	10
Marital status		
Inmarried	10	10
Intermarried	5	5
Not married	5	9

Table 6.2. Involvement in Howard County Jewish organizations

	Read Jewish organizational material (%)		Attended program, event, or class (%)	
	Ever (%)	Monthly (%)	Ever (%)	Monthly (%)
All Jewish adults	49	21	36	6
Engagement group				
Occasional	14	1	11	1
Personal	89	36	50	5
Organizational	75	18	59	18
Involved	92	61	80	18
Ages				
18-44	38	13	31	7
45-64	61	26	41	9
65 +	52	23	39	4
Parent status				
No children in household	49	18	33	5
Children in household	54	25	45	10
Marital status				
Inmarried	70	33	51	11
Intermarried	34	10	29	2
Not married	24	5	13	2

While nearly all (92%) in the Involved group read a Jewish organization's material and 80% attended a program of a Jewish organization, it is also notable that 89% of Personal Jews read material from a Jewish organization. This group's high rate of engagement in this activity, as well as other activities that can be done alone, is its defining characteristic.

Almost half of Howard County Jews (45%) attended a program, activity, or service at a local synagogue or congregation in the past year (Table 6.3). Twenty-four percent participated at the Jewish Federation of Howard County, 14% were involved in a program at the JCC of Greater Baltimore, and 9% attended a local Chabad program or service. Jews ages 45-64 tend to participate more frequently at each venue than the other age groups. More than half (54%) of those ages 45-64 attended an event or program at a local synagogue or congregation in the past year, compared to less than half of the other age groups.

The 86% of Howard County Jews who never attend programs at the JCC of Greater Baltimore were asked if the length of time it takes to travel to the JCC affects their program attendance; 28% (or one quarter of all Jewish adults) say that it does.

Table 6.3. Location of programs, activities, or services

	A local synagogue or congregation (%)	Jewish Federation of Howard County (%)	JCC of Greater Baltimore (%)	A local Chabad (%)
All Jewish adults	45	24	14	9
Engagement group				
Occasional	18	3	5	1
Personal	53	37	14	7
Organizational	77	37	17	13
Involved	83	59	36	38
Ages				
18-44	36	22	10	8
45-64	54	25	16	13
65 +	40	25	15	8
Parent status				
No children in household	42	22	10	7
Children in household	48	26	21	15
Marital status				
Inmarried	61	39	21	18
Intermarried	32	7	9	3
Not married	17	8	2	1

PERCEPTIONS OF JEWISH ORGANIZATIONS

Respondents were asked their perceptions of how welcoming, caring, and supportive local Jewish organizations are toward people like themselves. Thirty-eight percent of respondents did not know or had no opinion, and Table 6.4 displays the responses from among the 62% remaining who “very much” agreed with the positive statements.

Members of the Personal group were least likely to feel that local Jewish organizations are welcoming and supportive and, along with those in the Occasional group, that Jewish organizations care about people like them. Interestingly, younger Jewish adults ages 18-44 had a more favorable impression of Jewish organizations in this regard.

Table 6.4. Perceptions of Jewish organizations, very much agree

	Welcoming to people like you (%)	Care about people like you (%)	Supportive of people like you (%)
All Jewish adults	50	39	39
Engagement group			
Occasional	47	25	29
Personal	34	27	27
Organizational	76	66	63
Involved	56	51	48
Ages			
18-44	53	41	46
45-64	50	37	36
65 +	48	39	36
Parent status			
No children in household	48	36	40
Children in household	54	42	38
Marital status			
Inmarried	54	41	40
Intermarried	44	35	40
Not married	40	29	28

VOLUNTEERING AND PHILANTHROPY

In the Howard County Jewish community, 32% of Jewish adults say they engaged in some volunteer activity in the past month (Table 6.5). Of Jewish adults, 27% volunteered for a local non-Jewish organization in the past month, and 10% volunteered for a local Jewish organization. For Jewish organizations, 6% volunteered in a leadership role, and 7% volunteered in another type of role.

Although Personal Jews are more likely to volunteer in general and for a non-Jewish organization compared to Occasional Jews, both groups are just as likely to volunteer for a Jewish organization. Organizational and Involved groups volunteer at non-Jewish and Jewish organizations at similar rates, however Involved Jews are twice as likely to take on a leadership role. Finally, across the board, married adults volunteer at higher rates than adults who are not married.

Table 6.5. Volunteering in Howard County

	Type of organization			Role at Jewish organization	
	Any volunteering (%)	Non-Jewish (%)	Jewish (%)	Leadership (%)	Other (%)
All Jewish adults	32	27	10	6	7
Engagement group					
Occasional	23	23	2	0	2
Personal	43	40	5	3	3
Organizational	39	22	24	10	17
Involved	43	29	28	21	20
Ages					
18-44	33	29	7	3	5
45-64	34	26	13	7	9
65 +	32	26	11	7	7
Parent status					
No children in household	33	28	10	6	7
Children in household	32	25	10	4	8
Marital status					
Inmarried	38	29	16	8	12
Intermarried	38	36	4	3	3
Not married	11	10	3	2	1

Within the Howard County Jewish community, 86% of households report making a charitable contribution in the past year (Table 6.6). Almost two thirds (66%) gave to at least one Jewish organization, representing 75% of donor households. Thirty-two percent of Jewish households gave to organizations that primarily serve the Jewish community of Howard County or Baltimore.

Jewish adults ages 45-64 donate to local Jewish organizations at higher rates than Jews ages 65 and older, despite Jews ages 65 and older making more donations in general.

Table 6.6. Philanthropy

	Any donations (%)	Any Jewish donations (%)	Any local Jewish donations (%)
All Jewish households	86	66	32
Engagement group			
Occasional	77	50	13
Personal	92	68	31
Organizational	98	89	61
Involved	98	98	76
Ages			
18-44	64	40	12
45-64	93	72	45
65 +	95	79	36
Parent status			
No children in household	88	70	34
Children in household	82	57	31
Marital status			
Inmarried	95	82	51
Intermarried	81	54	22
Not married	83	61	26

The types of Jewish organizations receiving donations varied (Table 6.7). Forty-five percent of those who donated to a Jewish organization gave to a Jewish congregation, representing 15% of all Jewish households. The Jewish Federation of Howard County received donations from 29% of Jewish-organization donors, or 10% of all households.

Fifty-one percent of Jewish households say they received donation requests from Jewish organizations in Howard County or Baltimore. Eighty-eight percent of Jewish households in Howard County who received requests for donations from these local Jewish organizations, made such donations, compared with 34% who did not receive a request.

Table 6.7. Local Jewish organizations receiving donations

	Households that donated to a local Jewish organization (%)	All Jewish households (%)
Jewish congregation	45	15
The Jewish Federation of Howard County	29	10
Jewish school or camp	24	8
The Associated	21	7
Jewish-sponsored human service agency	15	5
Jewish social justice organization	14	5
Another Jewish organization	4	1

BARRIERS TO COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

There are a number of reasons why people may not feel connected to Jewish community. For 49% of Jewish adults in Howard County, one key impediment to a stronger relationship is a negative view of offered activities (Table 6.8). For a similar proportion, 47%, one obstacle is not feeling comfortable in their level of Jewish knowledge. For 45%, not knowing enough people at Jewish organizations and programs is a barrier. For a little under one quarter of the population, obstacles include not feeling welcome (21%) or their political views (16%). In light of the last year's antisemitic violence, it is noteworthy that for 13% of adults, safety or security concerns inhibit their involvement in the Jewish community.

Those who expressed any feelings of limitation to their desired participation in Jewish life were invited to share more detail about what they felt, and why. About 350 respondents provided answers, which were categorized and are presented in Table 6.9.

Table 6.8. Any limitation to Jewish community connections

	Have not found interesting activities (%)	Level of Jewish knowledge (%)	Do not know many people (%)	Not welcome (%)	Political views (%)	Safety or security concerns (%)
All Jewish adults	49	47	45	21	16	13
Engagement group						
Occasional	38	55	40	15	7	6
Personal	68	42	46	42	42	24
Organizational	46	43	34	8	11	20
Involved	57	19	59	21	13	14
Ages						
18-44	39	58	38	15	14	7
45-64	54	41	49	26	15	13
65 +	55	31	44	20	21	23
Parent status						
No children in household	47	45	39	20	16	12
Children in household	51	44	53	21	16	15
Marital status						
Inmarried	57	36	41	23	17	12
Intermarried	50	41	55	20	16	16
Not married	26	73	35	15	14	14

Table 6.9. Limitations and barriers, in the words of community members.

Type of limitation/barrier	Number of responses
Feeling unwelcomed due to identity or other reasons	90
Political views	53
Time constraints	46
Distance or location of institutions/programs	34
Views about Israel	26
Do not feel knowledgeable enough	26
There is not enough outreach and engagement	22
Something else	71

Some respondents indicated that they felt, or feared they would be, unwelcomed in Jewish spaces because of who they are. In some cases, respondents preemptively anticipated this outcome and, in other cases, this fear was a result of direct experience. The latter was true particularly for interfaith families, Jews of color, and Jews who identified as LGBTQ. Others described the community as cliquey and exclusive, which they felt makes it unwelcoming to newcomers.

Being gay, my spouse and I do not really feel welcome nor included.

Would love to hear more about interfaith families and relationships to feel more welcome.

As a Jew of color, I often feel like I am seen and treated like I am not Jewish.

I think sometimes communities that are already formed are not as welcoming to new people.

Not knowing someone who is willing to welcome you to their already formed Jewish community limits my connection.

The non-Orthodox community is not very welcoming. There is no appreciation for being an outsider.

People who hold political views that they perceive as the minority do not always feel comfortable in Jewish spaces.

There is no tolerance for a politically conservative Jew in Howard County.

My husband attends an Orthodox synagogue where most of the members are conservative Republicans. While everyone there is very accepting of me, I am and have always been a Democrat and feel uncomfortable when the conversations turn to politics.

Busy with family and work responsibilities, some community members noted that not having enough time is a limitation that prevents them from participating in the Jewish community.

I'm too busy with work to find time for Jewish community or religious activities.

It's more a function of raising three kids, getting each to where they need to go and working full time. It's a time of life type of thing. As things slow down, I would probably get more involved.

Respondents who live outside the areas of highest Jewish concentration wrote about the challenges of not having local synagogues, programs, and events.

The biggest limit is that there are no synagogues in our area. The last two to which we belonged, both in [another county], are now defunct.

We are very spread out in Howard County, and there are not many Jewish families in my neighborhood or at our public school.

To me a limiting factor in being Jewish in Howard County is the lack of a JCC. While there are a variety of synagogues and ways of worshipping, I feel there is lack of "Jewish" community.

INFORMAL INVOLVEMENT IN THE JEWISH COMMUNITY

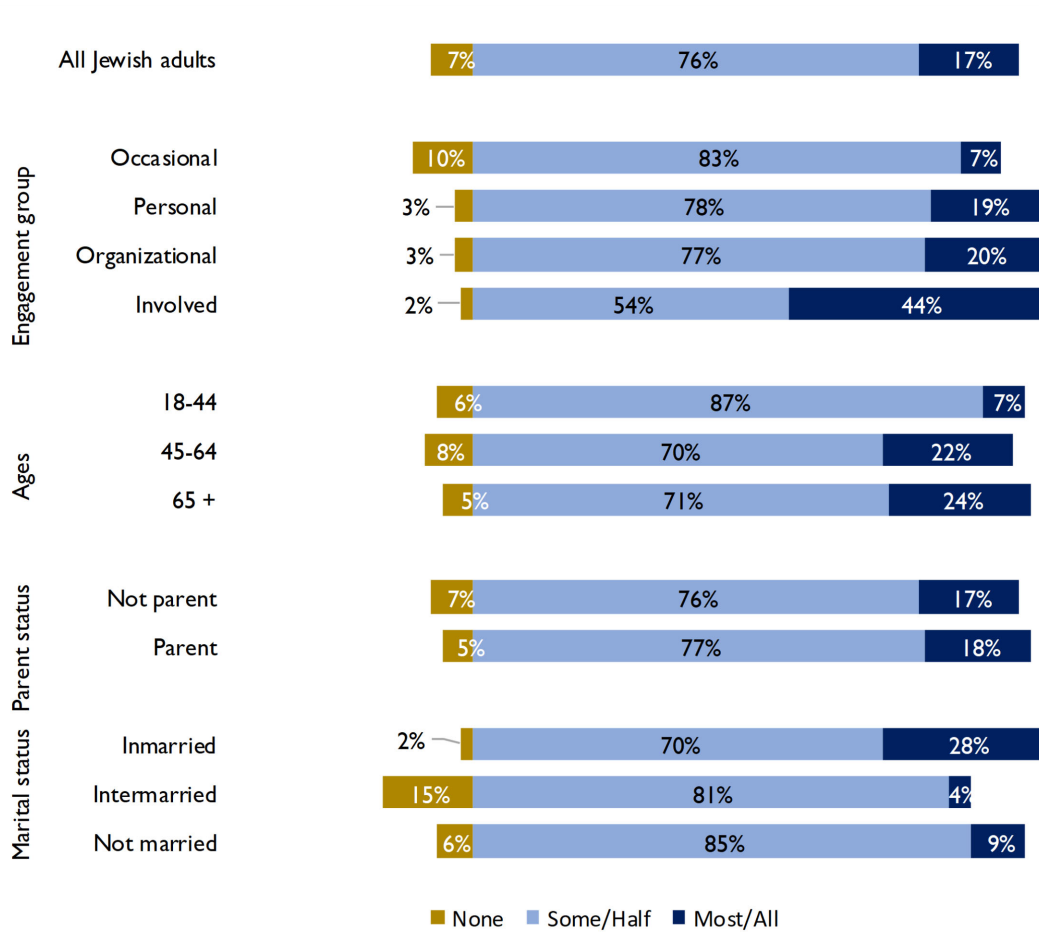
Community engagement is closely tied to personal connections and friendships among Jews. The vast majority (93%) of Jews in Howard County have at least some close Jewish friends, and 17% report that most or all of their closest friends are Jewish (Figure 6.1). Forty-four percent of the Involved group say that most or all of their close friends are Jewish, reflecting their deep engagement in the Jewish community, but even 90% of the Occasional group have some close Jewish friends.

INFORMAL AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

Jewish informal and cultural activities include those that are not necessarily sponsored by Jewish organizations, such as discussing Jewish topics, streaming Jewish content online, or reading Jewish books (Tables 6.10a, 6.10b).

Seventy-eight percent of Jewish adults discussed Jewish topics in the past year, while 24% discussed these topics frequently. More than three quarters (78%) of the Jewish community engaged in a Jewish cultural activity, such as attending Jewish theatre productions or reading Jewish books. Sixty percent of Jewish adults read a Jewish publication, including articles, magazines, and newsletters from a Jewish organization (60%).

Figure 6.1. Jewish friends



Question: "How many of the people you consider to be your closest friends are Jewish?"

More than half of Jewish adults (59%) read online Jewish content, such as websites, email newsletters, or social media posts, and 29% watched or listened to Jewish content online, such as a podcast or by “streaming” religious services.

Table 6.10a. Frequency of participation in informal and cultural activities, past year

	Talk about Jewish topics		Engage in Jewish culture		Read Jewish publications	
	Ever (%)	Frequently (%)	Ever (%)	Frequently (%)	Ever (%)	Frequently (%)
All Jewish adults	78	24	78	13	60	15
Engagement group						
Occasional	61	8	62	2	32	< 1
Personal	99	36	96	17	98	23
Organizational	99	12	77	2	63	1
Involved	99	65	97	48	99	57
Ages						
18-44	58	22	70	6	36	4
45-64	92	29	79	18	75	20
65 +	92	20	85	14	70	20
Parent status						
No children in household	76	24	80	12	57	15
Children in household	88	24	70	15	66	12
Marital status						
Inmarried	97	36	85	22	85	21
Intermarried	75	14	57	3	41	4
Not married	45	9	85	6	27	11

Table 6.10b. Frequency of participation in informal and cultural activities, past year

	Read online Jewish content		Watch/listen to online Jewish content	
	Ever (%)	Frequently (%)	Ever (%)	Frequently (%)
All Jewish adults	59	17	29	2
Engagement group				
Occasional	38	< 1	1	0
Personal	93	28	53	3
Organizational	55	1	29	< 1
Involved	94	63	79	10
Ages				
18-44	39	6	14	2
45-64	75	23	38	2
65 +	68	21	34	2
Parent status				
No children in household	58	16	26	3
Children in household	68	18	35	1
Marital status				
Inmarried	81	25	39	3
Intermarried	45	5	17	1
Not married	33	13	19	2

ANTISEMITISM

Members of the Howard County Jewish community are concerned about antisemitism, but that worry is more directed at the national (61%) than at the local level (12%; Table 6.11). Despite experiencing antisemitism at similar rates, older Jews are more concerned about antisemitism than are younger Jews. Organizational Jews are far less worried about antisemitism nationally (44%) than those in other engagement groups, but are concerned at similar rates to other engagement groups about local antisemitism.

Six percent of Jewish adults say they personally experienced antisemitism in the past year.

Table 6.11. Antisemitism

	Concerned about antisemitism, very much		
	United States (%)	Howard County (%)	Personal experience (%)
All Jewish adults	61	12	6
Engagement group			
Occasional	62	8	5
Personal	65	16	11
Organizational	44	17	2
Involved	63	17	10
Ages			
18-44	57	10	4
45-64	61	13	9
65 +	67	14	7
Parent status			
No children in household	65	12	7
Children in household	52	13	6
Marital status			
Inmarried	59	13	10
Intermarried	52	16	4
Not married	77	4	1

CHAPTER 7

CONNECTIONS TO ISRAEL

The Howard County Jewish community has strong ties to Israel, grounded in religious and cultural connections. Jewish adults in Howard County travel to Israel at similar rates to other Jews in the United States, feel strong connections to Israel, and closely follow news about Israel on a regular basis.

TRAVEL AND EMOTIONAL CONNECTION TO ISRAEL

Among Howard County Jewish adults, 42% have been to Israel at least once (Table 7.1). This share includes 25% of Jewish adults who have been to Israel only once, 13% who have visited more than once, and 4% who have lived in Israel at some point. This rate of travel represents an equivalent proportion to US Jews in general, of whom, as of 2013, 43% had been to Israel.¹⁶ The engagement group with the greatest proportion of members who have been to Israel is the Involved group (66%).

Travel and emotional connection to Israel are deeply linked. As seen in Table 7.1, those with stronger emotional connections to Israel are more likely to have traveled to Israel and visited more often. Seventy-four percent of those who feel “very much” connected to Israel have been there, compared to 11% who are “not at all” connected.

On average, those who have been to Israel were last there 20 years ago. Five percent of travelers to Israel went in the past year, in 2018 or 2019. Thirty percent last traveled to Israel between 2010 and 2017, 15% visited between 2000 and 2009, and the remaining 50% before 2000.

Table 7.1. Travel to Israel

	Never (%)	Once (%)	Multiple times (%)	Lived there (%)
All Jewish adults	58	25	13	4
Engagement group				
Occasional	68	23	8	1
Personal	61	24	9	6
Organizational	51	32	14	3
Involved	34	26	29	11
Age				
18-44	65	21	11	3
45-64	52	31	14	3
65 +	59	20	12	8
Parent status				
No children in household	61	21	14	4
Children in household	52	32	10	5
Marital status				
Inmarried	45	30	19	7
Intermarried	69	21	8	2
Not married	77	17	5	1
Connection to Israel				
Not at all	89	11	< 1	< 1
A little/somewhat	51	35	12	2
Very much	26	24	34	16

TYPES OF ISRAEL TRAVEL

Fourteen percent of Jewish adults have traveled with a Jewish organization on a mission or other sponsored trip to Israel (Table 7.2). Adults who traveled to Israel on an educational or volunteer program represent 7% of the population. Fourteen percent of age-eligible adults (those younger than 47) traveled to Israel on Birthright.

Table 7.2. Types of Israel travel

	Birthright (of age eligible; %)	Federation/organization mission (%)	Education/ volunteer (%)
All Jewish adults	14	14	7
Engagement group			
Occasional	9	14	4
Personal	17	8	4
Organizational	30	26	8
Involved	28	18	12
Age			
18-44	16	10	6
45-64	--	23	7
65 +	n/a	11	5
Parent status			
No children in household	16	13	6
Children in household	12	20	6
Marital status			
Inmarried	22	22	7
Intermarried	8	9	8
Not married	12	9	2
Connection to Israel			
Not at all	< 1	2	< 1
A little/somewhat	26	18	6
Very much	39	31	16

EMOTIONAL CONNECTION TO ISRAEL

Consistent with the levels of travel to Israel is the community's emotional attachment to Israel (Table 7.3). Sixty-seven percent of Jewish adults feel at least "a little" connected to Israel, and 21% feel "very much connected." The strongest connections to Israel are found among the Involved group (49% very much), nearly all of whom feel a connection to Israel to "some extent."

Those who have been to Israel feel more strongly about it, with 56% of those who have gone multiple times and 82% of those who have lived there feeling "very much" connected. Meanwhile, only 9% of Jews who have never been to Israel feel "very much" connected to Israel.

Table 7.3. Emotional connection to Israel

	Not at all (%)	A little (%)	Somewhat (%)	Very much (%)
All Jewish adults	33	19	27	21
Engagement group				
Occasional	49	19	22	10
Personal	29	19	30	22
Organizational	17	25	33	26
Involved	2	14	34	49
Age				
18-44	54	13	20	13
45-64	21	19	35	25
65 +	21	28	25	26
Parent status				
No children in household	38	17	24	21
Children in household	21	23	35	21
Marital status				
Inmarried	21	18	31	30
Intermarried	37	29	24	10
Not married	57	9	22	13
Travel to Israel				
Never	49	21	20	9
Once	14	18	47	20
Multiple	< 1	13	31	56
Lived in Israel	1	17	1	82

NEWS ABOUT ISRAEL

Sixty-six percent of Howard County Jewish adults sought out news about Israel in the past month, including 27% who did so once a week or more (Table 7.4). The Involved group follows Israel news most closely, as do those who feel very much connected to Israel or who have traveled to Israel multiple times or lived there.

Table 7.4. Frequency of seeking news about Israel in past month

	Never (%)	Weekly or less (%)	More than weekly (%)
All Jewish adults	34	39	27
Engagement group			
Occasional	51	36	13
Personal	14	52	34
Organizational	37	55	9
Involved	4	27	68
Age			
18-44	54	38	8
45-64	20	42	38
65 +	27	39	34
Parent status			
No children in household	37	38	25
Children in household	27	45	28
Marital status			
Inmarried	21	41	38
Intermarried	34	54	12
Not married	64	19	17
Travel to Israel			
Never	46	40	13
Once	18	49	33
Multiple	17	31	52
Lived in Israel	0	19	81
Connection to Israel			
Not at all	68	30	2
A little/somewhat	22	53	25
Very much	7	29	64

VIEWS ABOUT ISRAEL

Respondents were asked if they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements about Israel (Table 7.5). Nearly all respondents view Israel as a homeland for Jews throughout the world (90%). Over half of Jewish adults, 56%, see Israel as a source of pride, and 53% agree that the country is a lively democratic society. The Howard County Jewish community is not without its political disagreements with Israel, however. Thirty-nine percent of Jewish adults view Israel as a religious fundamentalist society, and only 24% believe Israel is a defender of gender equality.

Table 7.5. Views about Israel, agree or strongly agree

	Homeland for Jews throughout the world (%)	Source of pride (%)	Lively democratic society (%)	Religious fundamentalist society (%)	Defender of gender equality (%)
All Jewish adults	90	56	53	39	24
Engagement group					
Occasional	88	41	45	43	15
Personal	88	66	57	44	22
Organizational	88	64	63	26	32
Involved	95	81	73	26	41
Age					
18-44	92	34	31	62	16
45-64	89	74	66	23	26
65 +	89	58	71	30	29
Parent status					
No children in household	89	48	49	42	22
Children in household	89	71	66	30	27
Marital status					
Inmarried	91	68	62	30	26
Intermarried	82	50	55	30	21
Not married	95	34	35	69	20
Travel to Israel					
Never	88	45	41	43	19
Once	89	71	73	34	26
Multiple	97	72	72	30	28
Lived in Israel	91	71	83	22	55
Connection to Israel					
Not at all	77	10	21	64	5
A little/somewhat	94	72	66	23	27
Very much	97	90	82	32	44

COMFORT DISCUSSING ISRAEL

Respondents were asked how comfortable they felt discussing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Table 7.6). The majority, 74%, feel at least a little comfortable, and 28% feel very much comfortable. Those who have been to Israel and those who feel very attached to Israel feel more comfortable discussing the conflict.

The 49% of Jewish adults who felt not at all or only a little comfortable discussing the Israel-Palestinian conflict were asked about several possible reasons for their discomfort (Table 7.7). The most commonly cited reasons were feeling that they did not know much about the topic (58%) or that they did not feel they have a part in the conversation (34%). Others believe they have a

Table 7.6. Comfort expressing opinion on Israeli-Palestinian conflict

	Not at all (%)	A little (%)	Somewhat (%)	Very much (%)
All Jewish adults	26	23	24	28
Engagement group				
Occasional	38	24	18	20
Personal	13	22	21	44
Organizational	16	31	38	14
Involved	8	14	35	43
Age				
18-44	44	23	13	19
45-64	19	25	29	27
65 +	7	19	33	41
Parent status				
No children in household	29	21	23	27
Children in household	17	27	27	29
Marital status				
Inmarried	14	25	28	34
Intermarried	22	28	24	25
Not married	56	10	17	17
Travel to Israel				
Never	35	18	19	29
Once	12	32	32	24
Multiple	10	35	29	25
Lived in Israel	< 1	4	44	51
Connection to Israel				
Not at all	47	16	12	25
A little/somewhat	17	27	34	22
Very much	8	23	23	46

minority opinion on the topic (12%), while some, simply, do not have an opinion on the conflict (11%). Six percent are uncomfortable discussing Israel-Palestine because they believe the discourse is too hostile.

Table 7.7. Reasons for discomfort expressing opinion on Israeli-Palestinian conflict

	Do not know much (%)	No part in conversation (%)	Minority opinion (%)	No opinion (%)	Discourse feels hostile (%)
All Jewish adults uncomfortable discussing Israel	58	34	12	11	6
Engagement group					
Occasional	58	34	13	11	4
Personal	36	40	21	12	8
Organizational	51	40	16	11	5
Involved	19	54	10	12	5
Age					
18-44	66	31	13	14	1
45-64	40	49	10	7	10
65 +	24	29	36	10	6
Parent status					
No children in household	58	28	13	11	5
Children in household	35	59	19	10	4
Marital status					
Inmarried	38	55	5	11	4
Intermarried	36	42	39	16	9
Not married	85	6	3	5	2
Travel to Israel					
Never	61	27	17	8	5
Once	27	58	14	8	5
Multiple	41	52	6	31	7
Lived in Israel	--	--	--	--	--
Connection to Israel					
Not at all	78	13	16	10	6
A little/somewhat	30	52	16	7	4
Very much	--	--	--	--	--

CHAPTER 8

FINANCIAL WELL-BEING AND HEALTH NEEDS

Jewish organizations in Howard County allocate a significant share of resources toward caring for families and individuals in need. The relative affluence of the community has provided sufficient resources to meet the needs of many. Nevertheless, it is clear that there are some unmet needs in the community.

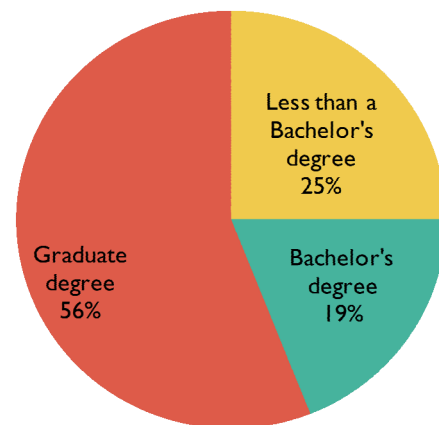
Similar to the US Jewish population as a whole, the Howard County Jewish community is highly educated and relatively affluent. The vast majority of households describe themselves as living comfortably or better. Nevertheless, there are a significant number of households with unmet financial and health needs, including some that have financial situations limiting their participation in Jewish life.

Many Jewish households also include someone whose activity is limited by a health condition; in some cases, this condition limits participation in Jewish life. Some households report that they need health-related services but have not received them.

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT AND EMPLOYMENT

The Jewish population of Howard County is highly educated compared to the overall US population, as well as the US Jewish population as a whole. Seventy-five percent of Jewish adults in Howard County have earned at least a bachelor's degree, including 56% with at least one post-graduate degree (Figure 8.1). Within the general Howard County population, 61% of individuals ages 25 or older have at least a bachelor's degree, including 31% who have a graduate degree. In the US population overall, 30% of adults ages 25 and older hold bachelor's degrees, including 12% who

Figure 8.1. Educational attainment



hold advanced degrees. Among Jews in the United States, over half have attained at least a bachelor's degree (58%), including 28% who have graduate degrees.¹⁷

Seventy-nine percent of Jewish adults in Howard County are working, either full time (71%) or part time (8%). An additional 18% of the population is retired. The remaining 4% of the population are stay-at-home parents, unemployed, on temporary leave, or studying for a degree. Three percent of Jewish adults, including some already with jobs, are looking for work.

ECONOMIC WELL-BEING

Overall, Jewish households in Howard County make up an economically comfortable community. Nine percent of the community describe themselves as “prosperous” and just over one third (34%) say they are “living very comfortably” (Table 8.1). Those who say they are “living reasonably comfortably” make up 49% of Jewish households. But 8% say they are “just getting along,” a possible indication of economic vulnerability, and less than 1% say they are “nearly poor.”¹⁸

Among those who responded to the question about income, 66% reported household income of \$100,000 per year or greater,¹⁹ including 22% of Jewish households who reported household income of \$200,000 per year or greater (Table 8.2). On the lower end of the spectrum, 12% indicated their household income was less than \$50,000 per year.

As would be expected, households with younger members and with single adults have lower incomes.

As compared to the entire Howard County population, Jewish households tend to have slightly higher incomes (Table 8.3).²⁰

Table 8.1. Standard of living

	Prosperous (%)	Living very comfortably (%)	Living reasonably comfortably (%)	Just getting along, nearly poor, or poor (%)
All Jewish households	9	34	49	8
Engagement group				
Occasional	9	37	46	8
Personal	4	29	56	11
Organizational	7	29	53	11
Involved	16	30	48	5
Age				
18-44	9	23	66	3
45-64	10	31	50	10
65 +	9	45	36	10
Parent status				
No children in household	9	40	41	10
Children in household	9	21	65	5
Marital status				
Inmarried	13	33	51	3
Intermarried	11	37	47	5
Not married	2	30	50	18

Table 8.2. Household income in 2018

	\$200,000 or more (%)	\$100,000- 199,999 (%)	\$50,000- 99,999 (%)	Less than \$50,000 (%)
All Jewish households	22	44	22	12
Engagement group				
Occasional	18	44	23	15
Personal	17	47	25	11
Organizational	43	38	12	7
Involved	29	45	20	7
Age				
18-44	15	44	20	21
45-64	36	43	13	7
65 +	13	45	33	8
Parent status				
No children in household	19	36	28	17
Children in household	28	58	11	2
Marital status				
Inmarried	37	53	9	1
Intermarried	23	56	17	4
Not married	3	15	47	36

Table 8.3. Household income in Jewish households and all Howard County households

	Jewish households, 2019 (%)	All Howard County households, 2017 (%)
\$200,000 or more	22	21
\$100,000-199,999	44	37
\$50,000-99,999	22	25
Less than \$50,000	12	17

ECONOMIC INSECURITY AND POVERTY

Although the majority (92%) of Howard County Jewish households self-identify as living comfortably or prosperous, there are households that struggle with significant economic challenges. As one measure of economic need, respondents indicated whether they received government benefits or skipped necessities in the past year (Table 8.4). These benefits included Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI); Medicaid; subsidized housing; SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program); or daycare assistance. However, it is important to note that some of these benefits are not entirely restricted to low-income households (e.g., SSDI, Medicaid); accordingly, receipt of these benefits is only a possible indicator of financial need, not a definite indicator. Five percent of Howard County Jewish households receive some form of public benefit.

Respondents were also asked about life changes in the previous year that resulted in economic hardship. Twelve percent of households reported encountering such a hardship. Eight percent reported a change in employment, such as a reduction in pay; 3% experienced a change in health, such as major illness; 1% experienced a change in housing, such as foreclosure; and less than 1% experienced a change in family structure, such as divorce.

Financial insecurity is reflected in a lack of financial resources for emergency or future expenses. Thirty-five percent of all households are not confident in their ability to live comfortably during retirement. Eighteen percent of households do not have enough funds to cover three months of expenses were they to face an unexpected loss of income. Five percent could not cover a \$400 expense in full. Some households had to skip necessities over the last year, including 4% who could not eat, 3% who could not fill a medication prescription, and less than 1% who could not make a rent or mortgage payment.

The most striking differences in economic status reflect differences in age and parent status (Table 8.5). It is important to note that these characteristics are interrelated and reflect expected stage-of-life differences.

Financial barriers also present a barrier to fully participating in Jewish life for 6% of Jewish households (Table 8.6). Such barriers include the cost of synagogue membership or attending programs, and tuition for Jewish schools and camps.

Five percent of Jewish households do not have health insurance.

Table 8.4. Economic needs: Summary

	Percentage of Jewish households
Public benefits	
Any benefit	5
SSDI or SSI	4
Food stamps/SNAP, subsidized housing, Medicaid, or daycare assistance	2
Economic hardships	
Any hardship	12
Change in employment	8
Change in health	3
Change in housing	1
Change in family structure	< 1
Financial insecurities	
Not confident saving for retirement	35
Insufficient savings for three months' expenses	18
Financial constraint prevented participation in Jewish life	6
Inability to pay \$400 expense	5
Skipped or reduced a meal	4
Skipped medication prescription	3
Skipped rent or mortgage	< 1

Table 8.5. Economic insecurity by household characteristics

	Insufficient savings for three months' expenses (%)	Any economic hardship (%)	Skipped meal, rent, or medicine (%)	Insufficient savings for \$400 expense (%)	Any public benefit (%)
All Jewish households	18	12	6	5	5
Engagement group					
Occasional	14	15	4	3	2
Personal	23	10	13	7	11
Organizational	20	4	1	4	8
Involved	20	14	1	1	6
Age					
18-44	23	25	7	0	3
45-64	19	11	7	6	3
65 +	12	4	2	3	11
Parent status					
No children in household	16	10	5	5	7
Children in household	22	17	6	< 1	2
Marital status					
Inmarried	12	10	1	1	2
Intermarried	24	13	5	1	2
Not married	16	16	11	9	13

Table 8.6. Financial restrictions on Jewish life

	Financial constraint in Jewish life (%)
All Jewish households	6
Engagement group	
Occasional	3
Personal	12
Organizational	4
Involved	10
Age	
18-44	8
45-64	9
65 +	2
Parent status	
No children in household	4
Children in household	11
Marital status	
Inmarried	3
Intermarried	7
Not married	9

HEALTH STATUS AND NEEDS

As poor health can be an indicator of need for community-based services and may prevent individuals from participating in the community's programs, understanding the health status of individuals in the community is important.

Twenty-seven percent of Jewish households in Howard County include at least one person who is limited by some sort of health issue, special need, or disability (Table 8.7). In 10% of households, the health issue limits the ability to work or attend school. Three percent of households did not receive the services that were required to address the health need (not shown in table).

Table 8.7. Health challenges for anyone in household

	Any health issue, special need, or disability (%)	Health issue, special need, or disability causes limitation (%)
All Jewish households	27	10
Engagement group		
Occasional	21	7
Personal	39	14
Organizational	19	10
Involved	28	13
Age		
18-44	17	9
45-64	25	9
65 +	37	14
Parent status		
No children in household	29	11
Children in household	21	9
Marital status		
Inmarried	21	10
Intermarried	31	11
Not married	29	11

Half of households with a health limitation (representing 5% of all households) require assistance with basic care. Housekeeping assistance was required by 5% of households, home maintenance by 4% of households, and help with personal care by 2% of households.

Respondents who indicated that a household member is limited by a health issue, special need, or disability were asked to categorize the issue. The most frequent are chronic illnesses, occurring in 34% of households with a health issue, representing 9% of all Jewish households (Table 8.8).

Physical disabilities are faced by 5% of households. Three percent include someone with a developmental or cognitive disability, and 2% of households each have members with learning disabilities or mental illnesses.

Table 8.8. Type of health issue, special need, or disability

	Households with a health need (%)	All Jewish households (%)
Chronic illness	34	9
Physical disability	20	5
Developmental or cognitive disability	13	3
Learning disability	7	2
Mental illness	7	2
Other	18	5

CAREGIVING AND ELDERLY RESIDENTS

Fourteen percent of Jewish households serve as primary caregivers for a relative, separate from routine childcare (Table 8.9). Jews ages 45-64 are most likely to be providing care to someone else, as they are the generation “sandwiched” between younger children and older parents, and who themselves may be experiencing the first signs of ill health caused by aging.

Twenty-two percent of caregivers (representing 3% of all households) provide care for someone living in their own household, 40% of caregivers (representing 6% of all households) provide care for someone in another household in Howard County or Baltimore, and 48% of caregivers (representing 7% of all households) provide care for someone outside of the area. Six percent of caregiving households provide care to people in two or more of these locations. Nearly all caregivers, 90%, are helping a parent or parent-in-law, but some are providing care to a spouse (8%) or a child, whether a minor (4%) or age 18 and older (12%).

Eleven percent of Jewish adults have a parent living in an assisted living facility in Howard County or Baltimore, and 14% have a parent in a senior community elsewhere. Six percent of Jewish senior citizens in Howard County live in an assisted living facility, a nursing home, or an independent living community. Among those who do not, 7% are considering moving to one within the next five years.

Some senior citizens experience challenges related to aging. Four percent are at least somewhat limited with the transportation needed to go about their daily lives. Isolation is a problem for the 22% of senior citizens who are dissatisfied with the amount of time they spend with friends and family.

Table 8.9. Someone in the household provides care on regular basis

Caregiver in household (%)	
All Jewish households	14
Engagement group	
Occasional	15
Personal	11
Organizational	7
Involved	20
Age	
18-44	8
45-64	18
65 +	14
Parent status	
No children in household	15
Children in household	12
Marital status	
Inmarried	15
Intermarried	13
Not married	14

HEALTH LIMITATIONS AND JEWISH LIFE

Five percent of households include someone who, in the past year, was constrained by health issues from participating in the Howard County Jewish community (Table 8.10). Greater shares of Jews in the Involved (13%) group were limited in Jewish life by health restrictions. Fewer Jews younger than age 65 had health limitations constraining their ability to participate in Jewish life than did Jews 65 and older.

Respondents who indicated that health limitations affected their abilities to engage with Jewish life were invited to explain how. Of the 62 who responded, the most commonly cited limits to Jewish life were being too unwell to attend services and programs, or having children with special needs who could not be accommodated by Jewish educational institutions. However, the small number of responses to this question makes it hard to extrapolate conclusions with clarity.

Table 8.10. Health limitations to Jewish life

	Unable to participate in Jewish life due to health or ability constraint (%)
All Jewish households	5
Engagement group	
Occasional	1
Personal	9
Organizational	5
Involved	13
Age	
18-44	2
45-64	5
65 +	9
Parent status	
No children in household	6
Children in household	3
Marital status	
Inmarried	4
Intermarried	3
Not married	9

CHAPTER 9

IN THE WORDS OF COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Howard County Jews were given the opportunity to explain, in their own words, the strengths of the community, areas for improvement, and the Jewish experiences they find most personally meaningful. These responses, taken together, reinforce the themes presented elsewhere in the report and provide new insights into community needs and opportunities for improvement.

Over 490 respondents responded to questions asking for their impressions of the strengths of the Howard County Jewish community, as well as the gaps and areas for improvement. Over 500 described the experiences they found most personally meaningful.

This chapter summarizes the comments of the respondents who provided responses to these questions; many of these respondents commented on multiple topics. The numbers shown in this chapter indicate the actual number of respondents who mentioned each issue. Topics mentioned by fewer than 20 people are not included in this summary.

RELIGIOUS AND SPIRITUAL LIFE

Respondents commonly discussed congregational life and engagement in religious and spiritual activities when highlighting strengths and opportunities for growth in the community. Of the 137 respondents who discussed religious and spiritual life in Howard County, 72 felt it was a strength, while 64 felt it was a weakness.²¹

Those who described the strengths of religious life in Howard County emphasized the wide diversity of options for religious experiences in Howard County across the denominational spectrum.

Range of religious experiences (Reform, Chabad, etc.) is a strength.

Strengths are strong sense of community, including active congregations and a well-organized and well-run federation.

Strength is synagogue life because that is where you find community.

The fact that we found a Jewish congregation that welcomed us and our children...was a big thing for us because it's important that they get a Jewish education.

There are a lot of different denominations to choose from so you can find a congregation that works for you. We attended Conservative, Reform, and Reconstructionist before we settled on Reconstructionist for our family.

Some, however, felt that the diversity of options presented difficulties as well as strengths. Such respondents mentioned feeling fragmented in the community precisely because the population is distributed widely across many congregations.

There are a lot of different synagogues and congregations, so there is something for everyone. However, this can also be a weakness, since it can be difficult to get critical mass of people to help support each congregation since there are so many options and only so many Jewish people to support financially and through volunteer work.

The separation of all congregations. Congregations do not get along, and some are left out or do not get good communication from HoCo Jewish Fed. The Federation has made very little effort to help the congregations come together whether they are small ones or larger ones.

I am dismayed with the organized religious offerings in the county. I have not found a temple I feel comfortable with.

I think the members of the synagogues have grown further apart from one another. I loved it when we all saw each other at the Meeting House. Now there are too many individual synagogue buildings, so we don't get together so often.

When it comes to finding meaning in Jewish life, many respondents pointed a variety of religious activities, attitudes, and affiliations, including synagogue life, worship, heritage, tradition, and Jewish rituals. All told, there were 501 comments touching on some aspect of those features. This number includes multiple comments of certain respondents, who discussed more than one feature.

Every Friday night with the prayers, lighting candles, and everything brings the family together. Also when you go to the services you can hear about other views and different topics.

High Holiday services and shared Hanukkah and Passover.

Just being part of the tribe. Carrying on the traditions I learned, to my grandchildren.

Spiritual and religious ones primarily, in the synagogue, and at home during the Passover seders. Secondly, experiencing a sense of community tied to social and religious values, like tikkun olam.

The beautiful melodies of prayer.

Celebrating holidays and life cycle events with family and friends.

ACTIVITIES AND PROGRAMMING

One hundred seventeen respondents discussed activities and programming options in the community as a strength or opportunity for growth. Sixty-two respondents made positive comments, while 52 others felt there were opportunities for growth in the area of activities and programming offerings.

Those who emphasized positive aspects of programming focused on the wide range of options for a variety of age groups.

I think the Federation has improved a lot over the years, seems to be a wider variety of activities that they organize.

I appreciate the warm welcome we receive from our Chabad, and still do from our past temple. We can always find Jewish activities if we wanted to find them.

Good programming for young families (pre-school aged children). Not much else for school-aged children or general public.

(Covers the whole range): Great programs for young kids and adults, less for families with school-aged children. No informal gathering locations (like a JCC).

While many respondents celebrated the wealth of activities in the area, others expressed desire to see even more programming for all groups, particularly for seniors, disabled adults, families with children, young adults, and singles.

Need more social activities.

There is a need for more programming for adults in the evening.

Daytime programs of general interest to seniors.

I would like to see more social events that foster a sense Jewish community rather than asking for donations.

I'd like quality activities programming for disabled adults. There is little to none offered now. I'd like group housing for Jewish disabled adults. There is such a group in a neighboring county but not Howard.

There isn't a lot to offer families with young children, with both parents working full-time outside the home. We would love to meet other families raising their kids Jewish but haven't found any opportunities that take place on the weekends, aside from the occasional tot Shabbat.

More activities for younger adults that aren't focused on small children; more for older singles; more opportunities for basic learning of liturgy and Hebrew. A lot of our friends who grew up Jewish have very little knowledge of the liturgy and so feel awkward going to services mainly as not to be disrespectful.

Learning opportunities need to be short, organic, and not highlight the embarrassment of the adults.

No special programming for networking among Jewish adult singles or to encourage them to remain engaged as Jews.

Absence of social services within HoCo through Federation.

We also aren't very good at engaging young adults (20s)—although I'm not sure whether lots of people that age live here. We don't know how to find Jews unaffiliated with congregations, so it is difficult to gauge what they need. People don't live close together, so that creates some isolation.

Over 40 respondents reported frustration with the lack of a JCC in Howard County.

I like the educational programs, but I wish there were a closer JCC.

A Howard County JCC would be great.

Also absence of a JCC-type facility as a central meeting, programming, and activities center.

No JCC or central meeting location.

No JCC, so little opportunity for Jewish life outside synagogues.

I wish we had a JCC. We are missing a central place for Jewish people from all over the county to gather and participate in activities.

Programs and activities are one area where many Howard County Jews find meaning in Jewish life. In particular, respondents mentioned social programming, social justice/social action programming, and volunteering and charity as core to meaning in Jewish life. Over 100 different comments focused on these areas as sources of Jewish meaning.

Volunteering and religious services.

Synagogue volunteering, participation in social events, services.

Social gatherings, lectures, cooking classes.

Thoughtful discussions of social issues.

Planning, implementing, and promoting Jewish programming.

Jewish overnight camp, BBYO. My children have really benefitted from and feel connected to being Jewish because of the community aspect of both programs, particularly the connection to Jewish teens across the country and around the world.

Social opportunities to develop a friendly community.

SOCIAL LIFE

One hundred respondents addressed social life and inclusivity in the Howard County Jewish community in their comments. Fifty-seven respondents felt these were strengths of the community, while 42 felt they were weaknesses.

Those who emphasized the strengths of the social life of the community highlighted their perception of the Howard County Jewish community as accepting and inclusive to Jews from many walks of life. Nevertheless, even those who described the community so positively described some key gaps in services available.

A strength is that it is very accepting of all types of families—interfaith families, adopted kids, etc. A gap is that I haven’t seen many county- or area-wide programs for families (many seem to be geared towards only kids, only women, etc.) and that are low or no cost.

Sometimes I feel VERY welcome, to the point of intense interest. Other times I feel a dismissive attitude. Generally, I feel a much greater feeling of inclusiveness in Howard County than I ever felt living [in two other, much larger Jewish communities in the United States].

[The Jewish community of Howard County is] welcoming and connected to the greater community. Gaps are in lack of participation by many Jews in the county in either Jewish life or contributing to the Federation.

Very close knit community. Kind and helpful.

Lots of well-educated people. Many activities.

It’s a small community, but very welcoming.

Some felt that the community can be insular at times, with organizations overly focused on wealthy residents. Others mentioned a lack of socioeconomic and demographic diversity. Some respondents felt that the combination of general divisions throughout the community and widespread geographic distribution cause a degree of social fragmentation.

This county has become too exclusive and attracts people of who want a certain comfort zone. An outcome of unintended consequences is that it’s become insular.

Geared toward the wealthy, unfortunately. Very cliquy. If you have money, then you can participate. Much of the best federation programming is limited to high donors. So if a family belongs to a synagogue at \$3,500 and can still afford \$1,000-\$5,000 to give to the Federation, good for them, but it makes the rest of us feel left out.

The Federation seems to have only events where the more you give the more invitations you receive. I also feel when going to an event name tags do not need to show what level you give.

I think it's quite divided, and another issue is different areas of Howard County are far from each other so there are many synagogues but not a central community.

It is great if you are accepted and can afford it. The gaps are with diversity, physical, and economic differences.

Jews are widely dispersed throughout the county. There is no central body to unite. Federation has not taken that on completely and synagogues have been forced to provide programming as well, but it is not like other areas of the country that have JCCs and larger, tighter Jewish communities. Many of the Jews here are from other areas of the US or DC/Baltimore metro so they have no roots here.

Not very welcoming to single adults or older people. Seems to be very good for families.

A lot offered, very cliquy.

Many Jews in Howard County find social life central to finding Jewish meaning. Whether it is celebrating holidays with friends and family, community connection, or engagement with Jewish culture, 296 comments focused on social life in Howard County as crucial to finding meaning in Jewish life.

The most meaningful events are those in which I am able to connect with other people, bring my kids with me, and combine fun activities with learning something about Jewish culture or Israel.

Interacting with others in the Jewish community. Participating in Jewish activities.

Less for religious activities and more for cultural activities (adult education, interesting lectures, performing arts, holiday celebrations, etc.).

Any experience where my children get to connect with other Jewish children is really meaningful. Connecting with other Jewish families is important to us.

Family-related religious observances.

Community/friends/temple activities other than religious services.

I find the sense of community and of coming together as a community to be meaningful as we care for each other.

Experiences that form bonds of friendship, such as groups enjoying monthly activities of learning, creating, or giving back to the community.

OUTREACH AND COMMUNICATION

Seventy-nine respondents addressed Howard County Jewish organizations' efforts to reach out to members of the community. Sixteen respondents discussed these efforts as a strength of the community, but 60 said they were a weakness.

Those who felt communication and outreach were a strength focused on the diversity of methods for communication, as well as an effort to reach most Jewish residents.

Howard County Jewish Federation reaches out to most Jewish residents.

Events well-marketed, good email communication/ social media presence, well connected to area synagogues.

We offer a lot of variety in programming and strive to reach out to the community at large. Unfortunately, too many within the community are clearly not very interested in what we have to offer. Our traditional choice to have very individualized congregations means that they compete for funds and members—this creates a less collaborative environment.

Many respondents disagreed, however, feeling that organizations' efforts to reach out to members of the community were ineffective. They pointed to what they perceived as a lack of awareness about events, insufficient communication, and lackluster outreach that failed to bring all Jewish residents into the fold of the community or consistently to events.

[We need] coordination of fundraising, including optional increased donations for special events to cover costs and provide better experiences.

Communication. Some of the best communication from individual organizations is on Facebook. But not everyone is on that platform. There needs to be a better way (e-mails? fliers?) to communicate programming.

Communications and engagement. Most people don't know about the HC Jewish Federation, nor the activities, programs, and services it provides.

Hard to fit in, there is a lack of outreach to the wider Jewish community.

Inadequate awareness of available social services.

Lack of (awareness of) bereavement services.

Lack of information that makes me feel like we are a community.

Little outreach to new residents.

Not reaching out to new Jews in the community or publishing events etc.

The lack of reaching out to the community to get people involved.

OTHER AREAS OF JEWISH MEANING

There are a few additional areas where respondents reported finding meaning in Jewish life that are not strictly within the confines of the areas they identified as strengths or gaps in the community. In particular, respondents focused on education and Israel.

Education

Over 100 comments described finding meaning in Jewish educational and intellectual opportunities to connect with Judaism, whether in formal or informal contexts, at temples or day schools, or on trips.

Torah study.

Studying Jewish topics—religious, ethical, cultural, historical, literary, artistic.

Lectures and experiences, including travel, that focus on Jewish culture and history.

I do find educational and family-oriented experiences the most meaningful.

My children have made lifelong friends through Hebrew school. And were exposed to Jewish culture and religion so that they could make a choice regarding how much religion to include in their lives.

Israel

Over 30 respondents cited Israel as a source of Jewish meaning. These comments addressed a wide variety of experiences, from learning about and discussing Israel to traveling to Israel and valuing its historic and contemporary importance.

Some holiday observances; reading about Judaism and Israel.

Visits to Israel.

Educating our children and their friends about Israel and the impetus for its creation; their role in continuing to support Israel, learning about the challenges it faces. Reminding them that Israelis and Jews do not have to be better than anyone else, but the world holds a different standard and that creates a source of struggle. Educating our kids on truth of survival through hard work, compassion, consideration, and laughter. Seeing our 16 year old able to articulate the hypocrisy of the BDS movement and the importance of standing up for Israel's right for existence, self-defense, and prosperity.

The most meaningful events are those in which I am able to connect with other people, bring my kids with me, and combine fun activities with learning something about Jewish culture or Israel.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

The words of community members, taken together with the findings presented in chapters 1-8, contribute to a detailed portrait of the Jewish community of Howard County in 2019. This study has described community members' demographic characteristics, participation in Jewish communal life, and private Jewish activities, as well as their attitudes about Judaism, Israel, and the local Jewish community. The findings presented in this report lend themselves to a series of conclusions about the community today and recommendations that we hope will inform planning and policy-making by Howard County Jewish organizations for the next decade.

The Jewish community of Howard County is growing, largely thanks to newcomers from the neighboring Baltimore and Greater DC-area Jewish communities. Newcomers make up about one quarter of the community, but nearly half of all Jewish adults in the community have lived there for 20 years or more. The community is highly educated and predominantly well off, but a substantial minority are struggling economically. And although many community members express satisfaction with the quality of Jewish life in the community and the abundance of opportunities to participate, the community still has many people who remain outside of these frameworks. These dynamics lead to challenges and opportunities for the Howard County Jewish community.

In that spirit, and based on the responses of the 915 Jewish households residing in Howard County who completed the survey, we have identified several implications and recommendations for using the data from this study to enhance local Jewish life.

Expand outreach efforts throughout the community. Although the Howard County Jewish community offers many diverse opportunities for engagement in Jewish life, and many community members also take advantage of options for participation in Baltimore and Montgomery County, there are a number of obstacles that depress engagement across most demographic groups.

Participation in Jewish organizations is lower than one might expect from the numbers and types of Jewish activities in which households and individuals participate. Approximately half of adults in the community say the lack of interesting options for engagement is a key obstacle to participation. Although the community is relatively affluent, about half of Jewish households were never asked in the past year by local Jewish organizations for charitable contributions. And although many members of the community are active volunteers, very few volunteer under Jewish auspices. The community must do more to reach out to Jewish households and individuals throughout Howard County if they wish to increase engagement in Jewish communal life.

Be sensitive to differences of resources and backgrounds. The Jewish community of Howard County is proud of its openness to people from all backgrounds and perspectives, yet there are some members of the community who struggle to find their place. Some respondents reported financial barriers that constrained their participation in Jewish life. Others described feeling out-of-place because they feel their religious practice or political beliefs fall outside the norm for the community, or because they belong to a demographic group—interfaith families, Jews of color, and/or LGBTQ Jews—they feel is not fully included in Jewish spaces. Newcomers to the community often struggle to break into longstanding social circles, and because so many come

from Baltimore and the DC area, may feel more connected to those neighboring communities. To ensure that the community will be vibrant, it is essential to integrate newcomers and those with diverse views and backgrounds.

Expand low-pressure social and educational offerings. The Howard County Jewish community is tightly knit, with nearly half of adults having lived in the area for 20 years or more. This strength, however, exacerbates the challenges newcomers face in trying to incorporate themselves into the community. For nearly half of adults in the community, not knowing enough people at Jewish organizations and programs is a key barrier to participation. For a similar proportion, a lack of Jewish knowledge is a key barrier. The community should experiment with low-pressure adult education programs, where little to no knowledge of Jewish texts or traditions, or of Israel, is expected. Similarly, the community should explore options for social programming, including those directed exclusively at newcomers and others designed to help newcomers develop relationships with more established members of the community.

Promote cooperation between communal organizations. The Jewish community of Howard County is fortunate to have many strong institutions and congregations. Many community members described their synagogues as the places where they have their most meaningful Jewish experiences. However, many also describe the community as competitive rather than cooperative, with people mostly associating with those who belong to the same institutions and demographic groups as they do, and infrequent cooperation between organizations. For members of the community to feel connected, they require not only attachments to people who share their characteristics but also to feel that they are part of a broader community that embraces diverse groups and encourages interaction between them. The Jewish Federation of Howard County can serve as a unifying presence, working within and between Jewish organizations and programs to forge a more connected Howard County Jewish community.

Increase focus on families with children. Children constitute 21% of the Jewish population of Howard County, but with only 30% of age-eligible children involved in any form of Jewish education—including 16% in a Jewish day school or Hebrew school and 25% in a Jewish summer camp, youth group, or tutoring—it appears that the community has not fully captured the interest of young families. Engaging the community’s children in high-quality Jewish educational programs is critical to ensuring that they will maintain Jewish identities into adulthood. Given the low rates of synagogue membership in Howard County, efforts to increase engagement through PJ Library and programs that do not require synagogue membership are likely to be key.

These recommendations emerge from data collected systematically during the spring of 2019. The study measured participation in programs, institutional engagement, home-based behavior, unmet needs, and many other aspects of Jewish life in Howard County, using the latest methods of social science. The community has invested many resources in enhancing its programming, reaching out to diverse segments of the population, and building ties within the Howard County Jewish community, the surrounding community, and to neighboring Jewish communities. We hope this snapshot of the community will stimulate a discussion about how best to take advantage of the great strengths of the Howard County Jewish community, confront its challenges, and plan for its future.

NOTES

¹ Saxe, L., Sasson, T., & Aronson, J. K. (2015). Pew's portrait of American Jewry: A reassessment of the assimilation narrative. In *American Jewish Year Book 2014* (pp. 71-81). Springer, Cham.

² Ibid.

³ Pew Research Center. (2013). *A portrait of Jewish Americans: Findings from a Pew Research Center survey of US Jews*. Washington, DC: Pew Research Center.

⁴ This is an imperfect proxy because there are many Jews who are people of color, not college educated, or under age 25. However, patterns of growth or decline in this population are typically correlated with growth or decline in the Jewish population.

⁵ Based on US Census data for 2010 and American Community Survey one-year estimates for 2017 and 2018 (where available).

⁶ The components of the population do not add up to the total due to rounding.

⁷ Ukeles, J.B., & Miller, R. (2010). *What does your future hold? The 2010 Jewish Community Study of Howard County, executive summary*. Columbia and Baltimore: Jewish Federation of Howard County and The Associated: Jewish Federation of Baltimore.

⁸ If the Jews of multiple religions were excluded from the total Jewish population, as was done in the Pew study, the resulting proportion of Jews by religion would be 82%.

⁹ The definitions used in this study are similar but not identical to those used in the Pew Research Center's *A portrait of Jewish Americans* (Pew Research Center, 2013). Adults who are Jewish and a second religion, if they were raised Jewish or have Jewish parents, are classified by Pew as "Jewish Background" and are not included among the Jewish "count." This study classifies them as Jews of Multiple Religions and includes them in the count of both Jewish adults and Jewish children.

¹⁰ Pew Research Center, 2013.

¹¹ For the purposes of this study, both Bet Aviv and Columbia Jewish Congregation are treated as brick-and-mortar synagogues.

¹² Olitzky, K.M., & Judson, D. (2002). *The rituals and practices of a Jewish life: A handbook for personal spiritual renewal*. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing; Olitzky, K.M., & Olitzky, A.S. (2015). *New membership & financial alternatives for the American synagogue: From traditional dues to fair share to gifts from the heart*. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing.

¹³ This category includes membership in Oseh Shalom Synagogue, which serves many residents of Howard County but is technically within the catchment area of the Jewish Federation of Greater Washington.

¹⁴ Total adds up to more than 100% because some households are members of more than one congregation with different affiliations.

¹⁵ Although there is no JCC in Howard County, some Jewish households residing in Howard County are members of a JCC in other communities, typically Baltimore or DC.

¹⁶ Pew Research Center, 2013.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ No respondents described themselves as “poor.” This does not mean that there are absolutely no Jewish households in Howard County that would describe themselves as poor, but it does suggest that there are very few.

¹⁹ Twenty-six percent of respondents specifically indicated that they preferred not to answer the income question and are excluded from this analysis. However, of respondents who did not answer the income question, 2% indicated that their standard of living was “prosperous,” 42% said they were “living very comfortably,” 47% said they were “living reasonably comfortably,” and 8% said they were “just getting along.” Because these numbers are consistent with the standard of living reported by respondents who did answer the income question, it is likely that results would not be altered substantially if all respondents answered the income question.

²⁰ Based on data from the American Community Survey’s 2017 five-year estimates, which are the most recent data available.

²¹ Numbers do not add up to the total because of neutral comments. This will be true of other subjects in this chapter as well.

The Jewish Federation of Howard County nurtures and enriches Jewish life by empowering community, inspiring identity, and providing care for those in need.



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