

2024-2025

Orange County Jewish Demographic Study

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Brandeis

COHEN CENTER FOR
MODERN JEWISH STUDIES
STEINHARDT SOCIAL
RESEARCH INSTITUTE

 **NORC** at the
University of
Chicago

THE 2024-25 ORANGE COUNTY JEWISH DEMOGRAPHIC STUDY

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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.

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Henry and Susan Samueli moved to Orange County in 1995, delighted to set down deep roots for their young family. They immediately sought to make connections in the Jewish community, carrying on the traditions they were both raised with.

As the Samuelis financial resources grew, they found themselves in the most fortunate position to engage in *tzedakah* at scale, funding multiple projects and organizations that serve the local Jewish community. These projects have ranged from the small to the very large, including purchasing and then donating the land that would become the site of the Merage Jewish Community Center of Orange County, and purchasing the building that would become the only congregation in South County, Temple Beth El. In total, the Samuelis have donated approximately \$87M to support Orange County Jewish Life.

It has been, and remains, one of Henry and Susan's greatest priorities to ensure that Orange County can have a thriving, safe, joyful, and enduring Jewish community for generations to come. We at the Samueli Foundation are humbled by their trust to carry out this mission.

The Samueli Foundation is not a "Jewish organization" per se, but we are deeply committed to funding the future of Jewish Life in Orange County as part of our overall vision of wellbeing for all. We approach our work from a place of values, but as a philanthropic capital allocator, it is essential that we make our investments from a place of values *plus* evidence. This requires guarding against making decisions from or being overly influenced by cultural lore, past practices, or squeaky wheels.

Our funding must evolve in lockstep with community need—as expressed by the community itself. So, we went out into the community looking for the data we would need to make our next set of transformative investments in support of local thriving Jewish life.

In conversations with Jewish communal and lay leaders in Orange County, a common theme emerged: while everyone is interested in working to protect and strengthen Jewish life in the County, no one had strong, accurate data to use about the size, characteristics, locations, or current needs of the Jewish community. A community built off intuition alone risks misplacing its finite resources (both time and money), all the while missing opportunities to invest in efforts that would mean the most to the community as it exists today.

For nearly a century,¹ Jewish communities across America—finding themselves in the same place—have undertaken formal demographic studies to create this data set. Orange County had never had the

¹ The earliest studies date back to the 1920s, though "modern" studies have been conducted since the 50s-60s.



benefit of such a research effort, depriving the community—and particularly the organizations that *serve* the community—of vital information that allows for more strategic decision-making, responsive resource allocation, creative program development, and cross-organization collaboration.

We decided to remedy this absence of data by engaging [The Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies \(CMJS\) at Brandeis University](#) to conduct a study of the Orange County Jewish community, in partnership with [NORC at the University of Chicago](#), an innovative independent research organization. CMJS is a renowned research institute dedicated to the study of American Jewish life and religious and cultural identity. Over the past decade, CMJS has worked with more than thirty Jewish communities like ours to develop local community studies, using its cutting-edge methodology to illustrate the characteristics, attitudes, and behaviors unique to each place.

Our goals for supporting this research were:

- Give the widest set of Orange County Jewish community members an opportunity to reflect on their needs, practices, and opinions on existing Jewish community resources and the issues that most impact their lives
- Provide the entire community, and those who support it, with evidence driven by the community itself. This in turn would ensure all Orange County Jewish service and religious organizations are operating from the same, data-driven, actionable understanding of our entire community
- Demonstrate a new model for community collaboration by working in broad partnership across Orange County Jewish organizations
- Give the community knowledge and tools to proactively design its future
- Inform our future giving in response to community-driven insight

Jewish demographic studies are typically driven by the local Jewish Federation, or a group of Jewish organizations. We appreciate that it is unusual for a private family foundation to undertake this type of project on behalf of its community. In complete candor, we had no idea how much work we were signing up for—but we felt it was a responsibility we could not shy away from.

It turns out that private foundations are well-positioned in many ways to be natural partners for doing this type of work. We are neutral, in the sense that we have no agenda other than helping the Jewish community be the best version of itself it can possibly be. We have the capital and ambition to undertake a demanding project like this. We can be creative in how we design an inclusive process—such as giving participation grants to local Jewish partner organizations who helped us. And most



importantly, we can go about a project like this with a sense of urgency, unencumbered by politics or governance structures that can slow efforts down, and an independence that allows us to call out things that warrant the community's collective attention. We are here to surface facts, not take sides.

Our first step was to convene a Steering Committee—composed of Scott Braswell, then-CEO of Merage JCC; Tamy Cohen, Executive Director of OC Hillel; Rabbi David Eliezrie, of Congregation Beit Meir Ha'Cohen; Erik Ludwig, then-CEO and President of Jewish Federation of Orange County; Lindsey Spindle, President of the Samueli Family Philanthropies; and Rabbi Rick Steinberg, of Congregation Shir-Ha-Ma'alot—who worked with the Samueli Foundation and the research team to shape the survey. Most questions were taken from other Jewish community surveys, allowing data to be compared across communities; several new sections were developed for the specific needs of the Orange County study and to reflect a time period after October 7th, a life-altering event for many in the Jewish community.

We are deeply grateful to the **31** Orange County Jewish organizations that partnered with us to launch the study and the more than **1,300** members of our community that participated in the study between November 2024 and March 2025. We appreciate the time and care you took to complete the survey—sharing openly about your experiences and hopes for the Jewish community. None of this would be possible without you.

Our gratitude extends to many others. First and foremost, to our founders Henry and Susan Samueli, and the Samueli Foundation Board of Directors that extended to us the resources and encouragement to pursue this unique project. To our research team at Brandeis – led by Dr. Janet Aronson and Danny Nussbaum – we thank you for your substantial partnership and educational presence throughout this process. At several points we needed handholding and guidance, both of which you generously provided. We owe a special debt of gratitude to Jenna Weinstein and Rachel Posner at the Bridgespan Group who have worked tirelessly on this project through its many twists and turns; your creativity and dedication made this work possible.

This research represents an important milestone for and investment in the OC Jewish community. It reflects broad participation, unprecedented collaboration, and a collective commitment to learning and growth. We are excited to share the results and hopeful that they will be used not as an endpoint but as a catalyst for thoughtful dialogue, strategic action, and continued partnership—an enduring asset that will strengthen Jewish life in Orange County for the decade ahead.



We hope this study is just the beginning. We see it as a *starting point* for ongoing learning, conversation, and collaboration across the Orange County Jewish community. We invite readers to explore the data, consider how it reflects the experiences of you and your neighbors, and imagine how these findings could apply to Orange County's organizations, programs, and community. We hope that shared insights can help facilitate shared priorities and spur individual and collective action in support of our community. We look forward to partnering to forge a stronger, safer, and vibrant Jewish community for years to come.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Lindsey Spindle". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Lindsey" being more prominent than the last name "Spindle".

Lindsey Spindle

President and Board Director, Samueli Family Philanthropies on behalf of the Samueli Foundation

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Special Thanks

To the 1,328 respondents who completed the survey. Without their willingness to spend time answering questions about their lives, there could be no study.

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INTRODUCTION

The *2024-25 Orange County Jewish Demographic Study* was conducted by the Maurice and Marilyn Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies (CMJS) and the Steinhardt Social Research Institute (SSRI) at Brandeis University in partnership with NORC at the University of Chicago. This project was sponsored by the Samueli Foundation in partnership with local Jewish organizations and congregations. The study employed state-of-the-art methods to describe the characteristics, attitudes, and behaviors of the Jewish community.

This project represents the first comprehensive study of the Orange County Jewish community. In interpreting the data, it is important to bear in mind that the study represents the characteristics and views of community members at the time of the survey.

Methodology overview

This study is based on an analysis of a rich set of data collected from 1,328 eligible Orange County Jewish households between November 12, 2024 and March 2, 2025. These households were contacted by mail, email, and telephone, and invited to complete the survey online or by telephone.

The study design integrated households from a combined set of Jewish organizational lists (the list sample) with another set of households randomly selected from all remaining mailing addresses in the study geographic area (the Address-Based Sample or ABS). In addition, an innovative “open-access survey” enabled wider participation in the survey for those who did not receive a direct invitation and retained the scientific validity of the survey sample. In the main survey sample (excluding open access), 223,723 households in the study area received invitations to take the survey.

The survey instrument was developed uniquely for purposes of this study, drawing on standard questions from other surveys as well as questions that were developed specifically for Orange County. The survey was offered in English online and by telephone.

The survey of Jewish households was designed to represent the views of an entire community based on responses from a randomly selected sample of households in the community. When analyzing survey data, we are not only interested in the answers of the respondents, but also the larger subgroup or community that they represent. Each completed survey is assigned a numeric “weight” that indicates our estimate of how many people in the population of interest the respondent represents. The weighted respondent thus stands in for that segment of the population, and not only the household from which it was collected.

Despite the careful methodological approaches employed in this study, bias in estimates inevitably occurs. Assigning weights is a way to reduce such bias. The study uses survey weights to provide accurate estimates of the population. Survey weights account for the survey design, nonresponse, and adjustments based on external data for the Jewish and total Orange County populations,

including data from the American Community Survey,¹ American Jewish Population Project,² and enrollment and membership information from local organizations and programs.

Details of survey methods, weighting, and analysis are provided in the technical appendices, available from the study website.

How to read this report

This report summarizes the findings of the full study results. Each chapter presents an overview of findings for a particular topic. In some cases, this overview is followed by noteworthy differences in the overall results for key subgroups of the community, such as age groups or households with different financial means. For details of the findings from this report, including estimates for all subgroups, see the report appendices.

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.

As you read this report, keep in mind the following:

- Note that the base category or denominator for each analysis may differ, e.g., Jewish adults, Jewish households, Jewish households with children. The relevant category is noted in the text, table, or figure. In most tables, it appears in the top left of the table in bold type.
- Unless otherwise specified, references to “all Jewish adults” or “all Jewish households” refer to Jewish adults and Jewish households in Orange County.
- Throughout this report, the term “couples” includes those who are legally married and those who are partnered and living together. Unless otherwise specified, “children” refers to minor children under age 18.
- When a percentage is between 0% and 0.5% and would otherwise round down to 0%, the number is denoted as < 1%.
- When there are insufficient respondents in a particular subgroup for reporting reliable information, the estimate is shown as “—”.

How to read report tables

This report includes many tables. The table formatting provides important information regarding the interpretation of the data. We recommend familiarizing yourself with these formatting conventions before reading the report.

Numbers or estimates presented in a table are best understood as showing the percentage of the community, or a subset of the community, that has a particular characteristic or answered a survey question in a particular way. For the purpose of understanding tables, we define **group** as the overall

¹ <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs>

² <https://ajpp.brandeis.edu/>

population that we are reporting on in the table. Groups may be further divided as **subgroups** that are defined by demographic characteristics like age or region. We define **characteristic** as the attributes of the groups that we are attempting to understand through their responses to survey questions.

Row and column totals

When a table shows all possible values of a characteristic and those values are mutually exclusive, the characteristics will total 100. In that case, the table will show a TOTAL row or column of 100. When the row total column does not appear, it usually indicates that not all possible values are shown. In some cases, it means that multiple options could be selected (usually as a “select all that apply” question), and the total could exceed 100.

Note that in all cases when the total of 100 is shown, the numbers may not add up exactly to 100 due to rounding.

Interpretation of estimates and statistical significance

Because this report is based on survey data, no number in this report should be considered an exact measurement, but rather an estimate. The reported estimate for any value, known as a “**point estimate**,” is the most likely value we would expect to find if we had surveyed the entire population of Orange County Jewish households. It is likely that the true value is slightly lower or slightly higher.

In accordance with social science conventions, we provide estimates within a “95% confidence interval.” This means that we are 95% confident that, were we to obtain data from the entire population, the true number would lie within a relatively small range (hence a “**confidence interval**”), with the estimate at the center of the range. Although in some cases the range can be much larger, as a rule of thumb, this range or confidence interval can be thought of as about five percentage points higher or lower than the reported number.

Survey questions with fewer respondents and/or more response options will have wider confidence intervals. The exact confidence interval is different for each estimate and is not shown in this report to preserve readability of the data. Confidence intervals for specific characteristics can be calculated through analysis of the dataset.

Statistical significance is a way to assess whether *differences* between estimates reflect true differences between different segments of the population or are just the results of random differences in the group that answered the survey. Statistical significance is not a property of individual estimates, but of the relationship between estimates, and is used only when comparing estimates to each other. When differences are statistically significant, there is at least a 95% probability that we would find differences between those population segments on the characteristic in question if we collected data from the entire population.

For this report, statistical significance is relevant when we compare estimates for a **characteristic** in one **subgroup** to estimates of the same characteristic in another **subgroup**.

In the **tables** in this report, we designate statistically significant differences by shading them light gray. When a set of numbers is in light gray, we can say that these groups (usually named in the leftmost side of each row) are significantly different from one another in terms of the characteristic measured in the table.

For the **figures** in this report, we designate statistically significant differences by adding an asterisk, *, at the end of the figure title. When the asterisk is present, we can say that the subgroups illustrated in the figure are statistically significantly different from one another in terms of the characteristic measured in the figure.

Statistical significance indicates that at least one pair of numbers is different from another, but does not indicate which pair or pairs are different; it is most likely to be the numbers with estimates that are farthest apart. Because this depends on the confidence intervals (as described above), knowing exactly which numbers differ from one another requires additional analysis of the dataset.

As mentioned above, a useful rule of thumb is that most estimates have a confidence interval of at least ± 5 percentage points. That means that if estimates are less than 10 points different from one another, it is probable that the difference is not statistically significant. Larger differences are more likely to be statistically significant. Questions with fewer respondents or more response options will tend to have wider confidence intervals, meaning that differences between subgroups will have to be larger to be statistically significant.

Lack of statistical significance: In some cases, relatively large differences in estimates are not indicated as statistically significant. This might be the result of small sample sizes in the underlying data. To fully understand particular estimates, we recommend further analysis of the dataset.

Comparisons across surveys

Although comparisons across surveys are informative, because of methodological differences, they are less precise and reliable than assessments of the data from the present study alone. In several places throughout the report, data from the Pew Research Center’s 2020 study, *Jewish Americans in 2020*,³ are used to show how the Orange County Jewish community is similar to or different from the United States Jewish community. Most references to the US Jewish community in this report are drawn from the 2020 Pew study. **When data about US Jews is presented without attribution, it is from the Pew study.**

Additional references are also made to CMJS’ Combined Dataset (CDS). The dataset represents 29 local Jewish communities who conducted studies with CMJS between 2015-24 and includes over 60,000 respondents.⁴ At the time of publication, the CDS represents a population of more than 2,215,000 Jewish adults and nearly 1,450,000 Jewish households, which is more than one third of the national Jewish adult population. The population described by this dataset does not represent the

³ Pew Research Center, “Jewish Americans in 2020.”

⁴ Janet Krasner Aronson, Matthew A. Brookner, Matthew Boxer, Daniel Nussbaum, Raquel Magidin de Kramer, and Leonard Saxe. “Denominational Identity and Jewish Engagement,” in *American Jewish Year Book 2023*, ed. A. Dashefsky and I. Sheskin (New York, NY: Springer International Publishing, 2025).

entire US Jewish community, but only the Jewish populations in these communities. **When data about US Jews is marked as CDS, it is from the CMJS Combined Dataset.**

Reporting qualitative data

The survey included a number of questions that called for open-text responses. Throughout this report, direct quotations from respondents are incorporated to illustrate themes of the report. Some quotations have been edited for clarity or to preserve the anonymity of the respondent.

Direct quotations appear indented and in italics.

Limitations

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

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

Report overview

This report presents key findings about the Orange 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 1. Demographic Snapshot

The report begins with an overview of size and demographic composition of the Orange County Jewish community.

Chapter 2. Geography and Mobility

This chapter covers three related topics: the distribution of Jewish individuals and households within Orange County, length of residence in Orange County, and plans to move away.

Chapter 3. Jewish Engagement

This chapter describes the multifaceted ways in which Jewish adults define and express their Jewish identity. These patterns are described in terms of denominational identity, as well as a typology of Jewish engagement that has been uniquely developed for the Orange County Jewish community. This chapter also reports on attitudes about the meaning and importance of Judaism.

Chapter 4. Children and Jewish Education

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

Chapter 5. Congregations and Jewish Ritual

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

Chapter 6. Community Connections, Programs, and Activities

This chapter discusses membership and involvement in organizational, social, and personal Jewish life, and the barriers that limit involvement with Jewish organizations.

Chapter 7. Support for Jewish Organizations

This chapter examines the volunteering and philanthropic behaviors of the Jewish community, along with perceptions about local organizations.

Chapter 8. Connections to Israel

This chapter describes emotional attachment to Israel, travel to Israel, and a variety of attitudes about Israel. It considers how these attitudes have changed since October 7, 2023, and the subsequent war between Israel and Hamas.

Chapter 9. Antisemitism Concerns

This chapter discusses Jewish adults' experiences of, and concerns about, antisemitism.

Chapter 10. Political Views

This chapter describes the political views of OC Jewish adults and their primary election issues. It considers the relationship between political views and Jewish life.

Chapter 11. Economic Well-Being

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

Chapter 11. Health Needs and Care

This chapter examines the health and social service concerns of Jewish households. It includes a focus on mental health.

Additional study materials

All study documents and data are available for download from the study website, <https://www.brandeis.edu/cmjs/community-studies/orange-county-report.html>.

Detailed Subgroup Tables

Corresponding to the chapters in the main report, survey results in tables provided separately for key subgroups.

Comparison Charts

Detailed cross-tabulations of all survey data for key subgroups, provided in Excel format.

Technical Appendices

Details of methodology, data collection, analysis, full survey instrument and codebook, and study documentation.

Public Use Dataset

Dataset in Stata format for additional analysis by researchers. Any responses that identify individuals have been removed from the public use version.

CHAPTER 1. DEMOGRAPHIC SNAPSHOT

Jewish population estimates

There are approximately 56,600 Jewish households in the Orange County Jewish community (Table 1.1). These households include 124,400 individuals, of whom 93,500 identify as Jewish. The Jewish population comprises 3% of the total Orange County population, and Jewish households make up 5% of all households of Orange County.

Table 1.1. Orange County Jewish community population estimates, 2025

Total people in Jewish households	124,400
Total Jewish households	56,600
Total Jews	93,500
Adults (ages 18+)	107,300
Jewish	80,100
Non-Jewish or unknown religion	27,200
Children (under age 18)	17,100
Jewish	13,300
Non-Jewish or unknown religion	3,800

The OC Jewish community is older than the surrounding community and the Jewish population in general. OC includes fewer younger adults (age under 50) and more seniors (age 75+) compared to the OC general population and the US Jewish population (Table 1.2).

Table 1.2. Age distribution of adults

	Jewish OC (%)	OC general population (ACS 2023; %)	US Jews (Pew 2020; %)
	↓	↓	↓
18-34	21	29	28
35-49	18	25	23
50-64	27	25	20
65-74	17	12	17
75+	17	9	13
Total	100	100	100

The Jewish population (adults and children) is 45% male, 54% female, and 1% who prefer to self-describe.

Marriage and households

Seventy-two percent of all Jewish adults in Orange County are married, engaged, or partnered (Table 1.3). Of these couples, 69% are inmarried, and 31% are intermarried. This is a smaller share of intermarried couples than among all US Jews (42%).⁵

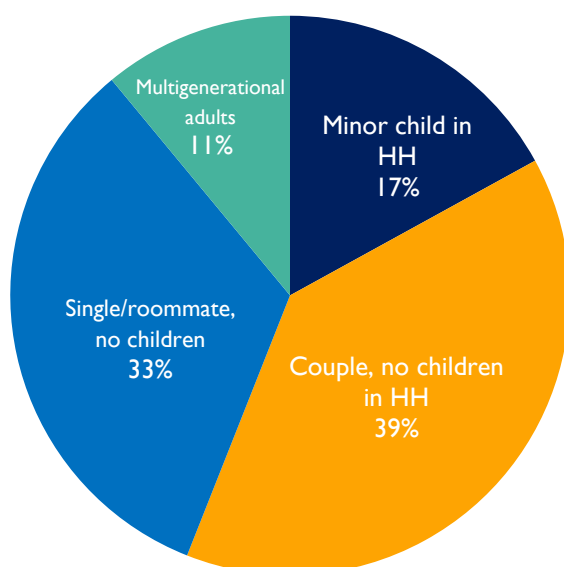
Intermarriage is highest among those under age 45.

Table 1.3. Relationship status of Orange County Jewish adults by age

	All Jewish adults (%)	Ages 22-44 (%)	Ages 45-54 (%)	Ages 55-64 (%)	Ages 65-74 (%)	Ages 75+ (%)
	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
Married/partnered	72	68	82	85	68	70
Of married/partnered						
Inmarried	69	62	70	68	75	77
Intermarried	31	38	30	32	25	23
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

Almost four in five (39%) of households include a couple without children (figure 1.1), Just 17% of households include minor children.

Figure 1.1. Household composition



⁵ Pew Research Center, “Jewish Americans in 2020.”

Racial diversity

In terms of racial and ethnic diversity, 88% of Jewish adults describe themselves as white non-Hispanic; 4% of Jewish adults consider themselves to be a person of color (Table 1.4).

Racial diversity is higher among OC Jewish children (11% are persons of color compared to 4% of Jewish adults, an indication the community may be becoming more racially diverse).

Table 1.4. Race and ethnicity

	Of Jewish households, at least one person in household has this identity (%)	Of Jewish households, everyone in household has this identity (%)	All Jews (%)	All Jewish adults (%)	All Jewish children (%)
	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
Self-identifying person of color	9	7	5	4	11
Combined race and ethnicity					
Single-race, non-Hispanic white	91	81	84	88	58
Single-race, Hispanic white	7	5	5	5	7
Any non-white racial identity, including multiracial, non-Hispanic	12	9	7	5	25
Any non-white racial identity, including multiracial, Hispanic	5	5	4	3	11
Total race/ethnicity	100	100	100	100	100

Note: Respondents were invited to identify themselves and others in their households as a Person of Color which is the basis of row 1 of this table. The rest of the table is based on response to separate race and Hispanic ethnicity questions.

There are several subgroups of the community that are of particular interest because of their identity. These groups are shown in table 1.5.

Table 1.5. Demographic identities

	All Jewish adults (%)	Of Jewish households, at least one person in household has this identity (%)
	↓	↓
Israeli American Jewish community	15	16
Russian-speaking Jewish community	15	17
LGBTQ+	8	13
Latin American Jewish community	7	7
Holocaust survivor or WWII refugee	3	4
Child or grandchild of Holocaust victim/survivor or WWII refugee	29	32

Note: Columns do not total 100 because any number of these identity group could be selected.

Well-being: Finances and health

To assess financial well-being, the survey asked respondents to provide a subjective assessment of their household's financial situation. Seven percent of OC Jewish households report they cannot make ends meet, and another 25% report they are just managing to make ends meet (Table 1.6). These two groups are combined for purposes of this report into a single category referred to as “struggling” and constitute 32% of Jewish households. Thirty percent of OC Jewish households have “enough” money, 18% have “extra” money, and 21% describe themselves as “well off.”

Table 1.6. Financial situation

Report category	Response option	All Jewish households (%)
		↓
Struggling	Cannot make ends meet	7
	Just managing to make ends meet	25
Enough	Have enough money	30
Extra	Have some extra money	18
Well off	Well-off	21
Total		100

11% of Jewish adults describe their physical health as fair or poor; 15% describe their mental health as fair or poor.

35% of households include someone with a chronic health issue, disability, or other health need that affects their participation in work, school, or activities.

Jewish denominations

Half of OC Jews have no specific denomination, significantly higher than among all US Jews (32%). The largest denomination is Reform, including about one third of OC Jews (Table 1.7).

Table 1.7. Denomination of Jewish adults in Orange County and the United States

	Orange County 2024-25 (%)	US Jews 2020 (%)
	↓	↓
Orthodox	3	9
Conservative	11	17
Reform	34	37
Other denomination	3	4
No denomination	49	32
Total	100	100

CHAPTER 2. GEOGRAPHY AND MOBILITY

Regional distribution

For this study, all geographic analyses are based on ZIP Code of residence. To better understand geographic differences between areas of Orange County, ZIP Codes are assigned to four geographic regions: the inland Central/North Orange County region, the North/Central Coastal Orange County region that extends from Seal Beach to Newport Beach, the Irvine region that includes the City of Irvine and neighboring Lake Forest, and the South Orange County region that extends from Laguna Beach, Laguna Woods, and Mission Viejo to San Clemente (see map in Figure 2.1).

The distribution of Jewish households in Orange County differs from that of the overall population. For example, 34% of Jewish households reside in the Central/North Orange County area, but 47% of all OC households live in that area (Table 2.1). One quarter of Jewish households are in the South Orange County area, but only 17% of all OC households are in that region.

Table 2.1. Region

	All Jewish households (%) ↓	All people in Jewish households (%) ↓	All Jewish individuals (%) ↓	All Jewish children (%) ↓	All OC households (ACS 2023) (%) ↓	All OC individuals (ACS 2023) (%) ↓
Central/North Orange County	34	34	33	30	47	52
Irvine	19	20	19	18	13	12
North/Central Coastal Orange County	22	23	22	23	23	20
South Orange County	25	23	25	29	17	15
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

[illegible]

Although there are few demographic differences across regions, Jewish households⁶ in the Central/North Orange County and Irvine regions are younger than those in North/Central Coastal Orange County and South Orange County (Table 2.2). In Central/North Orange County and Irvine, just over 40% of households are ages 22 to 44 (42% and 43% respectively), compared to 24% in North/Central Coastal Orange County and 18% in South Orange County. In the South Orange County region, 30% of households are ages 75 and over, compared to much smaller shares in this age range among the other regions.

Table 2.2. Region by age of head of household

All Jewish households (%)		Central/North Orange County (%)	Irvine (%)	North/Central Coastal Orange County (%)	South Orange County (%)
↓		↓	↓	↓	↓
Age					
22-44	32	42	43	24	18
45-54	12	11	17	13	10
55-64	19	14	16	31	18
65-74	18	17	15	18	24
75+	18	17	9	14	30
Total	100	100	100	100	100
Household composition					
Minor child in HH	17	14	16	22	17
Couple, no children in HH	39	38	39	40	41
Single/roommate, no children	33	38	27	29	35
Multigenerational adults	11	10	17	10	7
Total	100	100	100	100	100

Distribution of Jewish households and institutions

In this section, we consider the distribution of Jewish households across Orange County (regardless of the regions described previously) and the location of institutions that serve those households. We recognize that Orange County Jewish residents may participate with Jewish institutions outside of the county, so that should be considered in evaluating the potential for expansion.

High density ZIP codes are well served

OC ZIP Codes with the largest Jewish populations include 92604 (Irvine), 92612 (Irvine), 92625 (Corona Del Mar), 92637 (Laguna Woods), and 92692 (Mission Viejo). These five ZIP Codes each have greater than 1,500 Jewish households with more than 2,500 Jewish adults and children.

Together, the five ZIP Codes account for one-in-five OC Jewish households (19%).

⁶ The household age is that of the “head of household.” If there is a couple, household age is the oldest person in the couple. Otherwise, household age is the respondent age.

Similarly, Jewish institutions are concentrated in and around the five top ZIP Codes (see Figure 2.2). Nearly half (23) of the approximately 50 brick-and-mortar OC Jewish institutions are located in these ZIP Codes or in directly adjacent ZIP Codes. The five high-density ZIP Codes are home to nine institutions: two Chabad, two Orthodox, and two Reform synagogues, a Conservative and a Reconstructionist synagogue, and a university Chabad. Another 14 Jewish institutions, including those on the Samueli Jewish Campus, are located in directly adjacent ZIP Codes.

Distribution of households with children⁷ varies somewhat from the distribution of all Jewish households. Areas of high density include, from north to south: La Habra (90631), Fullerton (92831), Los Alamitos (90720), Huntington Beach (92649), Tustin (92780), Newport Beach (92625, 92660), parts of Irvine (92617, 92618), and Mission Viejo (92691). There are Jewish schools located near many of these areas.

Opportunities for expansion

There are several areas of Orange County that have moderately sized Jewish populations but few nearby institutions. San Clemente (92672, 92673), Dana Point (92529), Coto de Caza (92679), and Yorba Linda (92886, 92887) each has 1,000 or more Jewish households, and each has one Chabad center. No other Jewish institutions exist within these areas or in directly adjacent ZIP Codes.

There are several areas of Orange County that contain congregations and a moderate density of Jewish households. However, in those ZIP codes, few households belong to an OC Jewish congregation. These areas include Seal Beach (90740), La Habra (90631), Fullerton (92835, 92831), and Newport Beach (92625) (Figure 2.3a).

In the area of the county south of Irvine, there is only one supplemental school and preschool, despite the presence of significant numbers of households with children (see Figure 2.4).

⁷ Note that estimates of geographic distribution of children should be treated with caution due to sample size limitations.

Figure 2.2. Map of Jewish households and Jewish institutions in Orange County

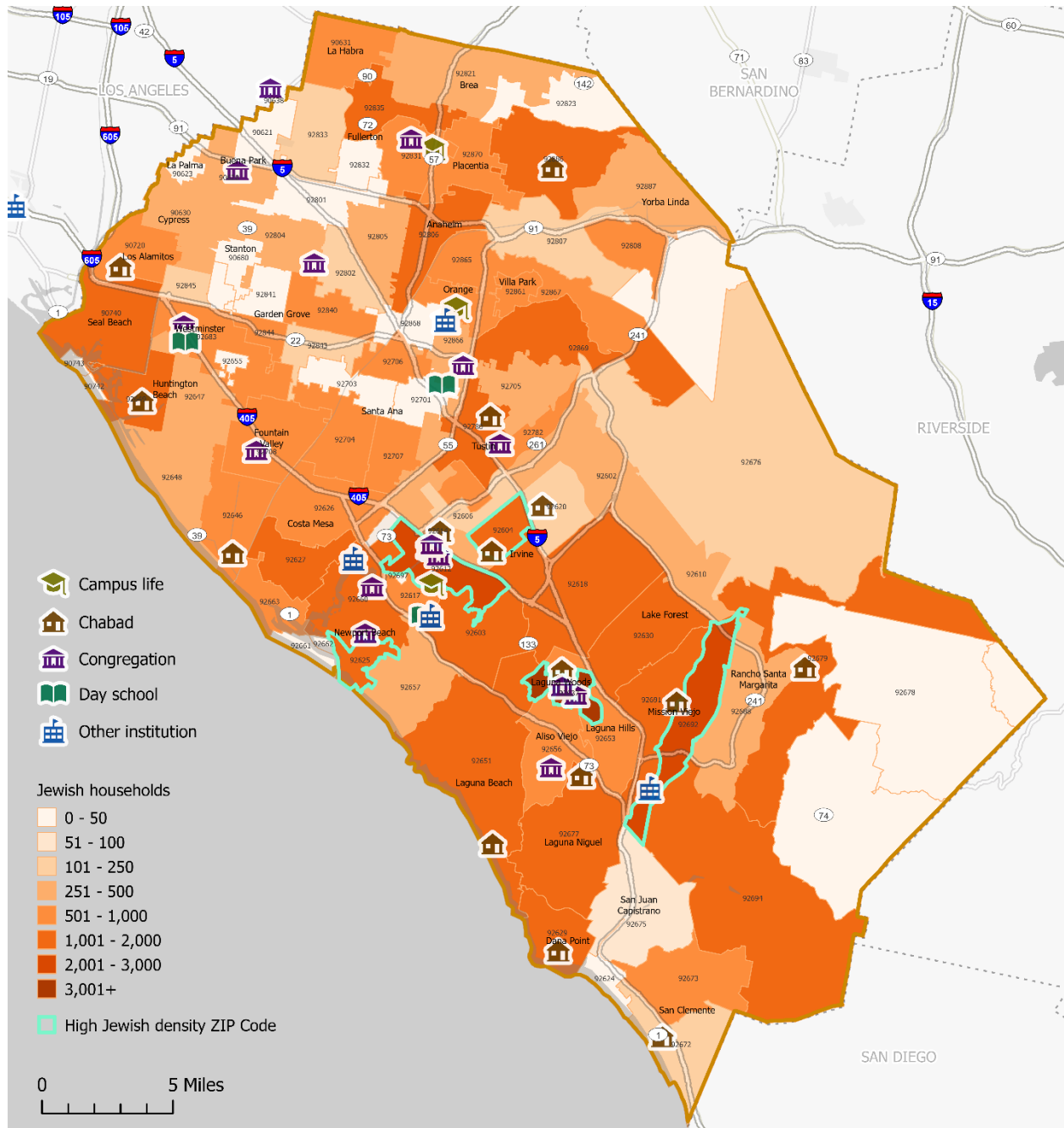


Figure 2.3a. Map of congregation member Jewish households

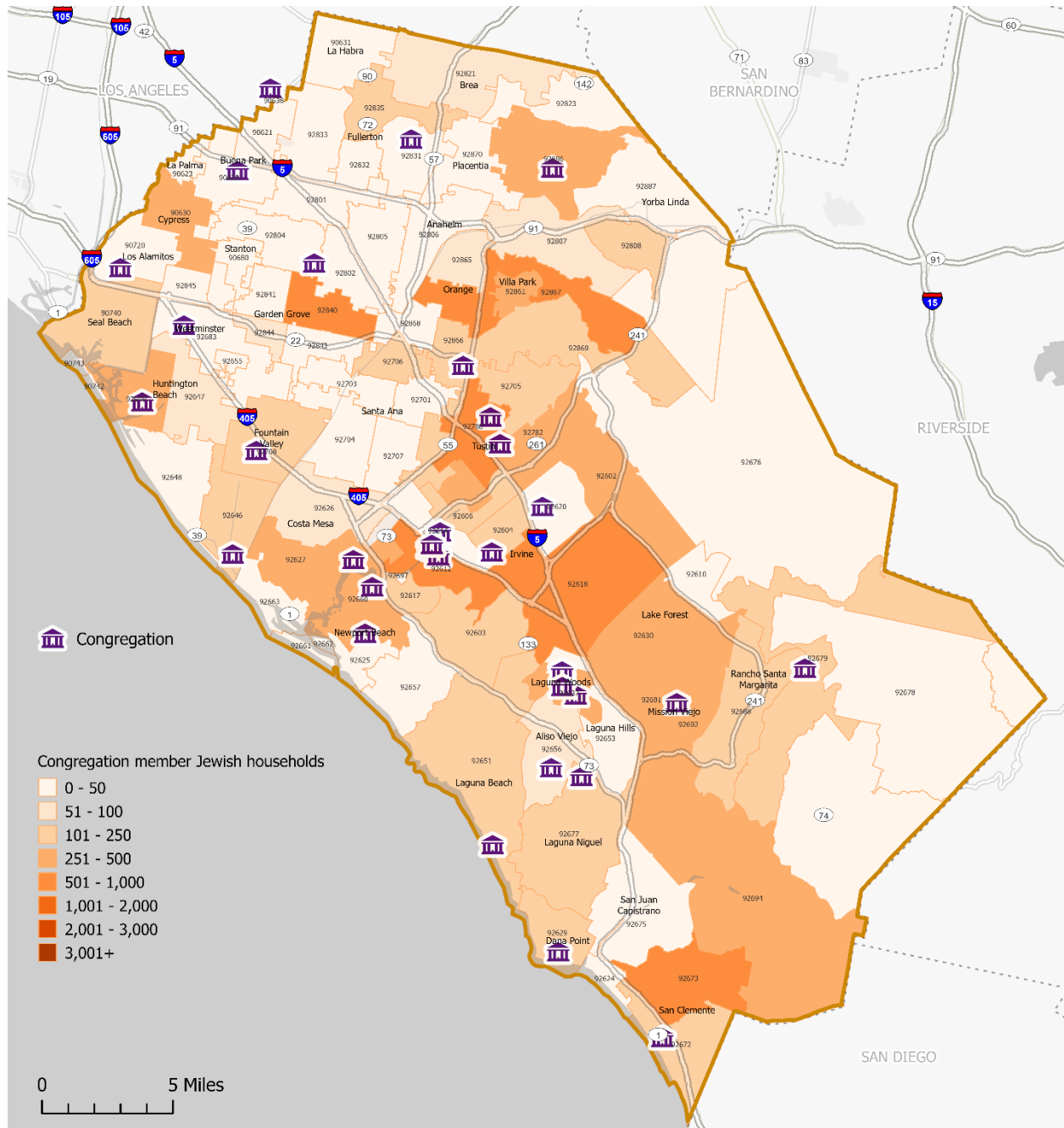


Figure 2.3b. Map of non-congregation member Jewish households

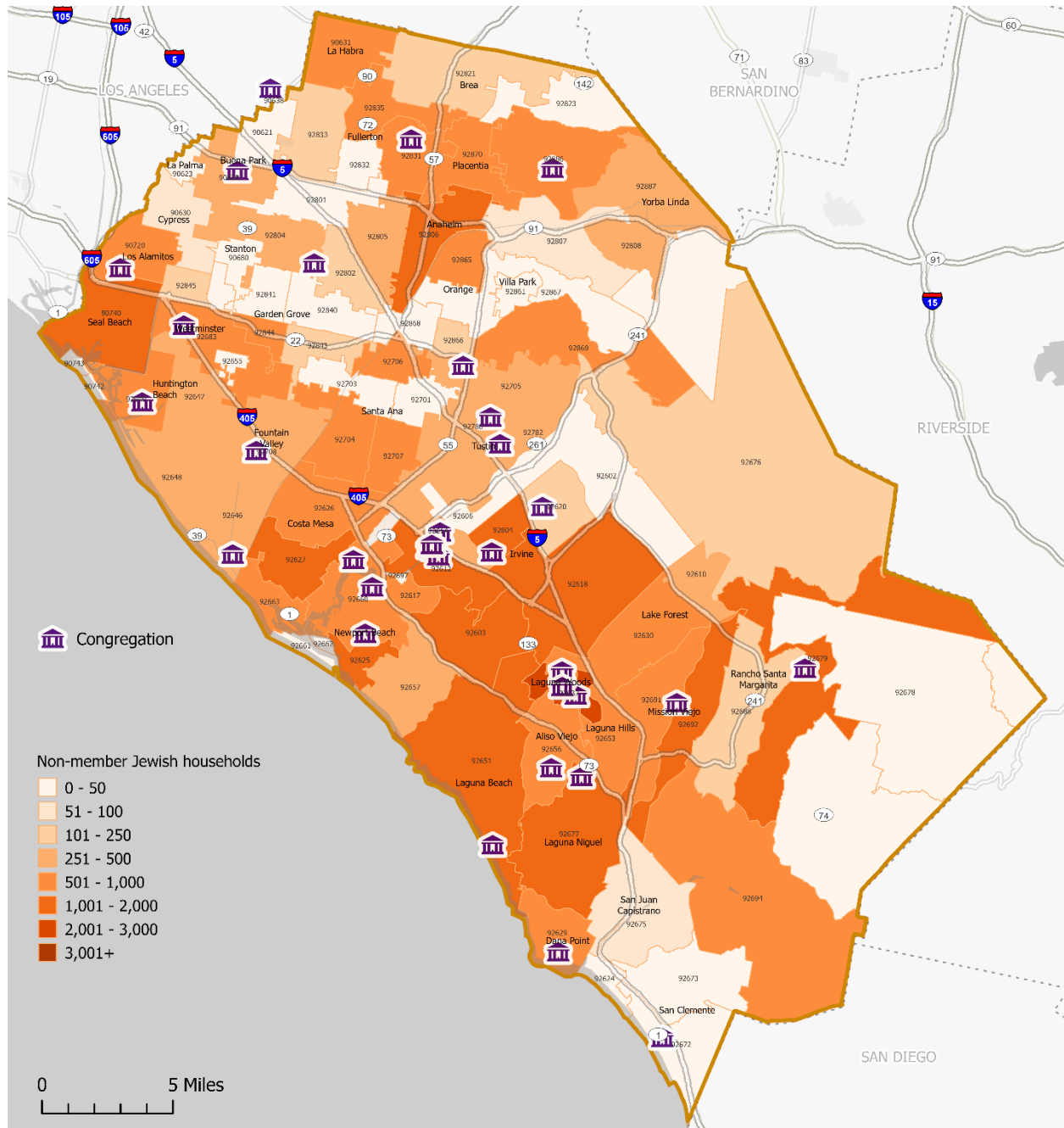
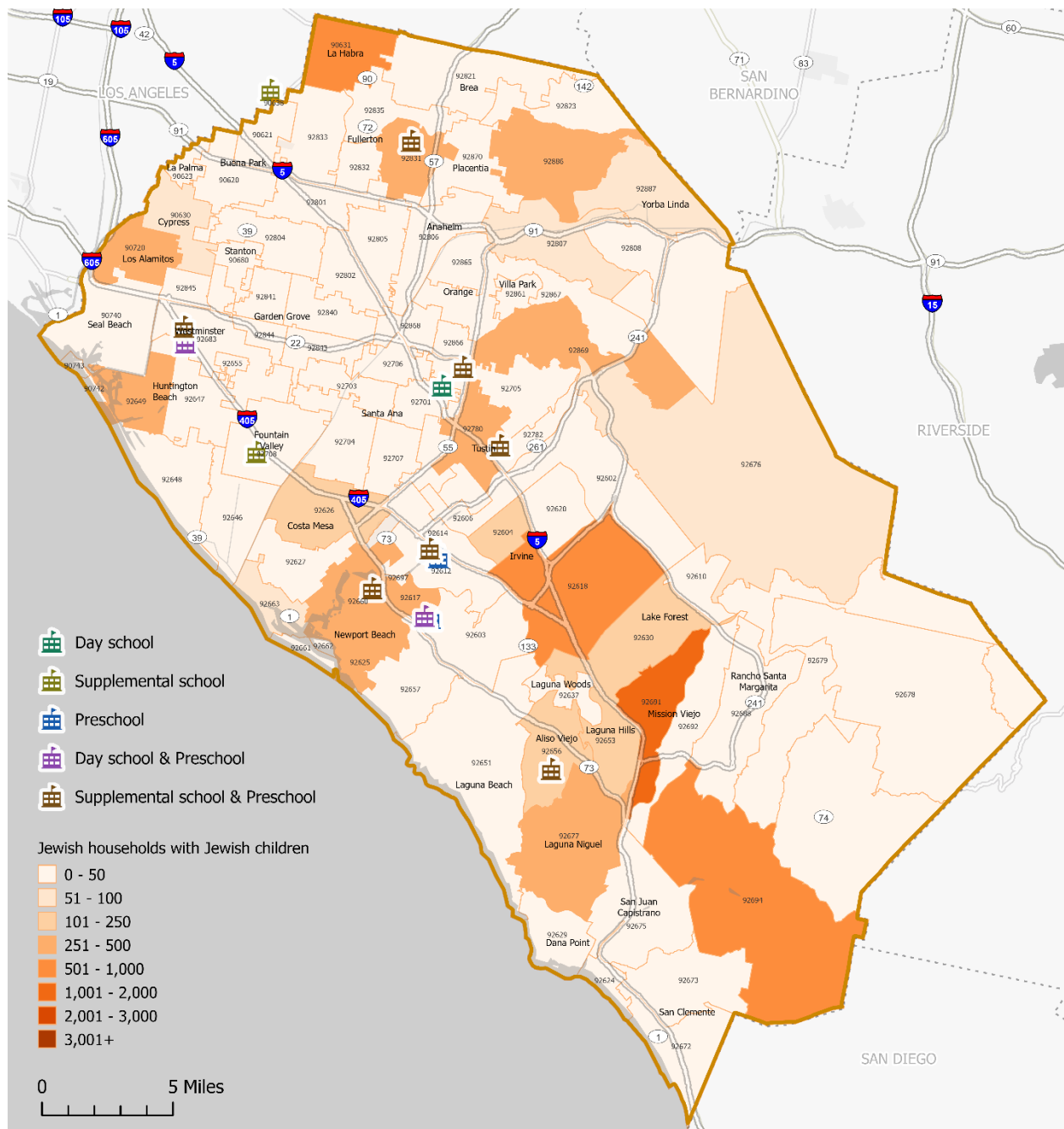


Figure 2.4. Map of Jewish households with Jewish children in Orange County

Note that estimates of geographic distribution of children should be treated with caution due to sample size limitations.



Origins, length of residence, and mobility

Most OC Jewish adults were born and raised outside Orange County. Only thirteen percent of OC Jewish adults were born in OC (Table 2.3). However, a larger share (27%) were raised primarily in Orange County, even if they were not born there (not shown in table.) Fourteen percent of Jewish adults have lived in OC for their adult life aside from college or graduate school (not shown in table).

Table 2.3. Birthplace of Jewish adults

	All Jewish adults (%)
	↓
United States, other than California	41
California, other than Orange County	28
Orange County	13
Outside United States	
Israel	5
Russia or Former Soviet Union	3
Latin American country	3
Middle East or North Africa (aside from Israel)	1
Other country	7
Total	100

Among all OC Jewish households, 26% include at least one individual who was born outside the United States (not shown in table).

Newcomers to Orange County

Just over one fifth of Jewish adults (22%) are newcomers to Orange County, having been residents for less than ten years (Table 2.4). Among adults age 22 to 44, 41% have lived in Orange County for less than ten years (Table 2.5). The plurality of recent residents (44%) moved from elsewhere in California (Table 2.6).

Table 2.4. Length of residence

	All Jewish adults (%)
	↓
Less than 10 years	22
10-19 years	17
20-29 years	20
30-39 years	18
40-49 years	10
50 years or more	12
Total	100

Table 2.5. Length of residence by age

	Less than 10 years (%)	10-19 years (%)	20-29 years (%)	30-39 years (%)	40-49 years (%)	50 years or more (%)	Total (%)
22-44	41	24	26	5	5	n/a	100
45-54	21	24	12	30	3	10	100
55-64	16	9	17	33	13	13	100
65-74	13	4	27	26	16	14	100
75+	7	12	10	15	21	35	100

Table 2.6. Previous residence

	Jewish adults who have lived in OC for <10 years (%)
	↓
Elsewhere in California	44
In the Northeastern US	16
In the Western US, aside from California	13
In the Midwest	4
Elsewhere in the United States	17
Israel	2
Other country	4
Total	100

Plans to leave Orange County

Over one-quarter of Jewish adults plan to move out of Orange County in the next three years, with 7% definitely planning to leave, and another 19% probably planning to leave, with the majority expected to leave California. (Table 2.7, 2.8). Among the adults who plan to leave, cost of living is rated as the most common reason for planning to leave (58%), followed by political climate (40%) (Table 2.9).

Table 2.7. Planning to leave, next three years

	All Jewish adults (%)
	↓
Definitely yes	7
Probably yes	19
Probably not	40
Definitely not	34
Total	100

Table 2.8. Planning to move where

	Jewish adults definitely or probably planning to leave (%)
	↓
Elsewhere in United States	69
Elsewhere in California	25
Move abroad	18

Table 2.9. Reasons for leaving Orange County

	Jewish adults definitely or probably planning to leave (%)
	↓
Cost of living	58
Political climate	40
Did not intend to stay in Orange County permanently	31
To be close to family who live elsewhere	30
For a job, career, or school	25
Characteristics of Jewish life	9
Availability of Jewish education (of parents)	3
Other	5
Not sure	2

CHAPTER 3. JEWISH ENGAGEMENT

We understand Jewish engagement as a complex, multidimensional expression of Jewish identity. This study illustrates that Jewish engagement is broader than denominational identification and extends beyond typical markers of affiliation, such as congregation membership and financial support for Jewish communal organizations. Jewish engagement includes ritual activities but can also be expressed through involvement with Jewish cultural and non-religious activities. Members of the community may participate in programs through traditional institutions but may also look to non-traditional and emerging organizations. To better capture a realistic portrayal of Jewish engagement in the Orange County Jewish community, this chapter introduces a new typology of Jewish engagement referred to as the Index of Jewish Engagement.⁸

Jewish denominational categories have long been the most common marker of Jewish engagement. In the past, denominations were closely correlated with measures of Jewish engagement, including behavior and attitudes. Denominations were closely associated with membership in affiliated synagogues. Over time, however, denominational labels have become less reliable descriptions of Jewish engagement and identity. Denominational categories have begun to overlap and shift in meaning and, as those labels are self-assigned, their meaning varies from one individual to another. Many synagogues and congregations no longer affiliate with a formal denomination, and a growing number of independent *minyanim* exist outside the traditional denomination structure. Finally, an increasing number of Jews do not identify with a particular denomination including, as noted below, nearly half of the Jewish adults in Orange County. Thus, denominational labels are limited in their ability to provide an accurate overview of the types and prevalence of Jewish behaviors and attitudes.⁹

How we developed these categories

The Index of Jewish Engagement is derived from a statistical analysis (latent class analysis or LCA) of survey responses to questions about 20 different Jewish behaviors to identify patterns of Jewish involvement in the Orange County Jewish community. Based on the analysis of these responses, we identified five primary patterns of behavior or groupings. Survey respondents were **not** asked to assign themselves to the groups (Table 3.1, Figure 3.1).

⁸ See Janet Krasner Aronson et al., “A New Approach to Understanding Contemporary Jewish Engagement,” *Contemporary Jewry* 39 (2018): 91–113.

⁹ Janet Krasner Aronson, Matthew A. Brookner, Matthew Boxer, Daniel Nussbaum, Raquel Magidin de Kramer, and Leonard Saxe. “Denominational Identity and Jewish Engagement,” in *American Jewish Year Book 2023*, ed. A. Dashefsky and I. Sheskin (New York, NY: Springer International Publishing, 2025).

Table 3.1. Jewish engagement groups

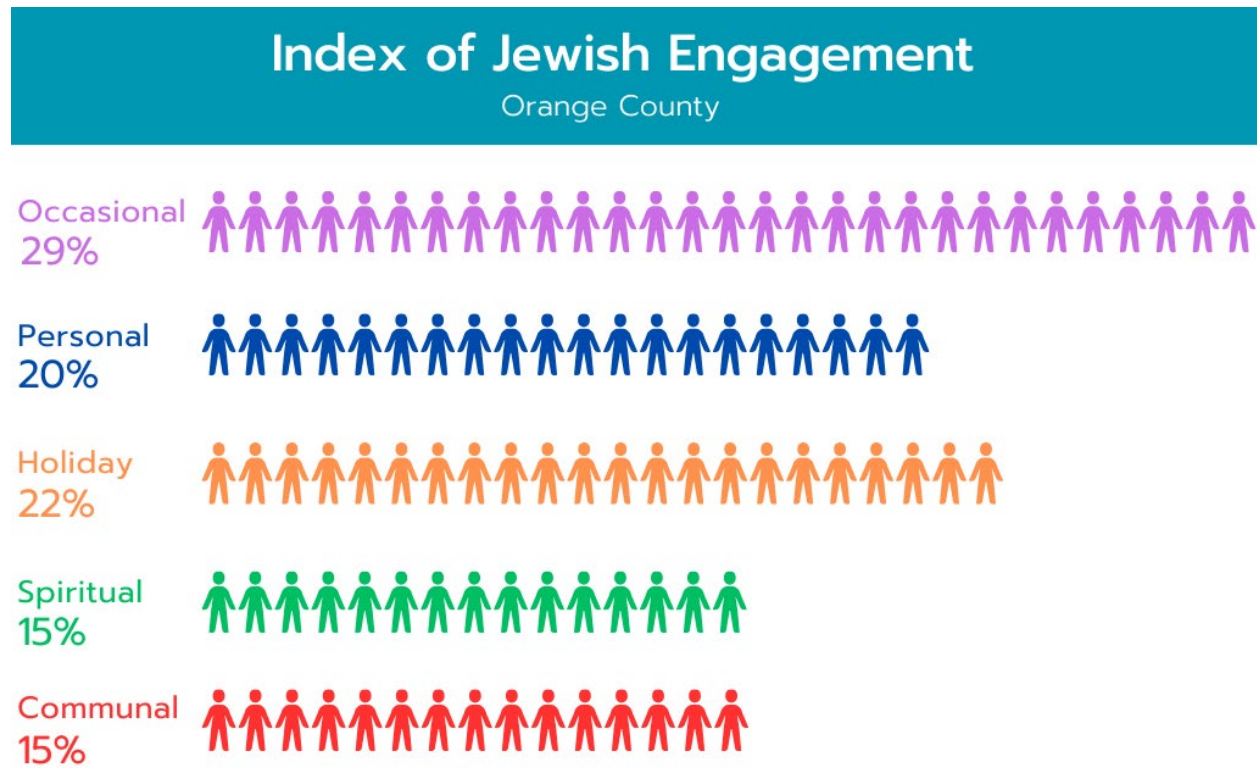
Name	Primary Jewish behaviors	All Jewish adults (%)
Occasional	About half celebrate Passover and Hanukkah	29
Personal	Individual activities like talking about Jewish topics and engaging Jewishly on social media	20
Holiday	Passover, Hanukkah, High Holidays, and occasionally Shabbat	22
Spiritual	Jewish holidays, keep some type of Kosher, eat Jewish foods, and talk about Jewish topics	15
Communal	Jewish holidays, attend services, belong to congregations, donate to Jewish organizations, participate in Jewish programs	15
Total		100

This analysis method was introduced in 2015 as a new framework for understanding Jewish engagement in local communities. The model presented in this report, including the set of classifications and their names, is derived directly from data collected for this study and is unique to the Orange County Jewish community.

The Index focuses on behaviors—the ways in which individuals spend their time and involve themselves in Jewish life. Such behaviors are concrete and measurable expressions of Jewish identity. In many cases, behaviors correlate with an individual’s demographic characteristics, backgrounds, and attitudes, but in other cases behaviors cut across these features.

The Index is designed to help identify engagement opportunities for a community with diverse needs and interests. Jewish adults’ decisions to take part in activities can 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.

Figure 3.1. Jewish engagement groups



The table below (3.2) shows the share of each group who engage in each of the listed behaviors that were used to develop the index. For example, 67% of all OC Jews attended a Passover seder. That share ranged from 45% of the Occasional group to 90% of the Communal group. The darker colors show those activities with higher shares of group participation.

Table 3.2. Jewish behaviors and engagement

	All Jewish adults (%)	Occasional (%)	Personal (%)	Holiday (%)	Spiritual (%)	Communal (%)
	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
Holiday behaviors						
Passover Seder	67	45	47	84	85	90
Hanukkah candles	82	49	89	96	100	97
Fast on Yom Kippur	37	1	28	55	66	59
Ritual behaviors						
Kosher, any	37	16	11	31	87	67
High Holiday services	41	0	<1	53	98	>99
Services, monthly +	23	0	2	18	36	87
Mark Shabbat, monthly +	36	0	6	45	67	88
Organizational behaviors						
Congregation member	30	<1	0	43	36	99
Organization member	18	<1	9	6	26	65
Informal group member	21	1	1	17	29	77
Volunteer for Jewish org	27	<1	10	33	37	73
Donated to Jewish org	63	36	47	77	72	98
Participate in organized Jewish programs, sometimes/often	38	<1	19	24	93	93
Individual behaviors						
Follow news about Israel very closely	43	15	54	43	79	45
Talk about Jewish topics, often	48	6	63	43	82	76
Read Jewish publications, often	28	0	51	10	42	59
Engage with Jewish culture, often	25	<1	36	12	61	34
Eat Jewish food, often	33	15	23	11	>99	42
Study Jewish texts, often	7	0	1	1	5	37
Social media	66	39	68	72	93	73

Legend	0-19%	20-39%	40-59%	60-79%	80-100%
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Denomination ≠ Engagement

In Jewish life, denominational identification is often used as a shorthand for Jewish behavior. In Orange County, almost half of Jewish adults do not identify with a specific denomination. Compared to all US Jews, Orange County includes a smaller share who are Orthodox or Conservative, and a larger share with no denomination (Table 3.3).

Table 3.3. Jewish denomination of Jewish adults

	OC Jewish adults (%)	US Jewish adults (Pew) (%)
Orthodox	3	9
Conservative	11	17
Reform	34	37
Other denomination	3	4
No denomination	49	32
Total	100	100

Jewish denominations do not provide a complete picture of Jewish life because they are based on self-identification and are markers more of participation in ritual observance than other types of Jewish behaviors. One of the goals of the Index of Jewish Engagement is to provide a more comprehensive, nuanced, and contemporary understanding of Jewish engagement. In the past, it would have been fair to assume that Jews with no denomination were not involved with Jewish life. However, as we see below, although the largest share of Jews with no denomination are in the Occasional group (42%), Jews with no denomination are included in each of the other groups (with the exception of the Orthodox group): Personal (23%), Holiday (20%), Spiritual (11%) and Communal (6%) (Table 3.4).

Table 3.4. Jewish engagement by denomination

	Orthodox (%) ↓	Conservative (%) ↓	Reform (%) ↓	Other denomination (%) ↓	None (%) ↓
Occasional	0	9	20	22	42
Personal	18	8	18	41	23
Holiday	20	18	27	23	20
Spiritual	4	42	13	1	11
Communal	58	23	22	13	6
Total	100	100	100	100	100

Meaning of being Jewish

OC Jewish adults differ not only in their Jewish behaviors but also in how they think about being Jewish, and most think of their Jewish identity in multiple ways. Nearly three quarters of Jewish adults (72%) describe themselves as Cultural Jews, and half of Jewish adults (51%) describe themselves as Spiritual Jews (Figure 3.3). Of all aspects of Jewish life, 83% consider leading an ethical and moral life as essential to being Jewish; 73% consider connecting with family and traditions as essential to being Jewish, and 72% consider caring about Israel as essential to being Jewish (Figure 3.3).

Figure 3.2. Which of the following terms would you use to describe yourself as a Jew? Select all that apply

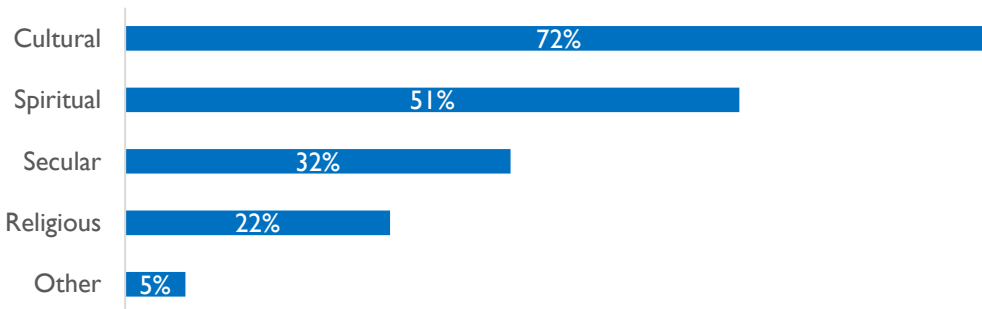
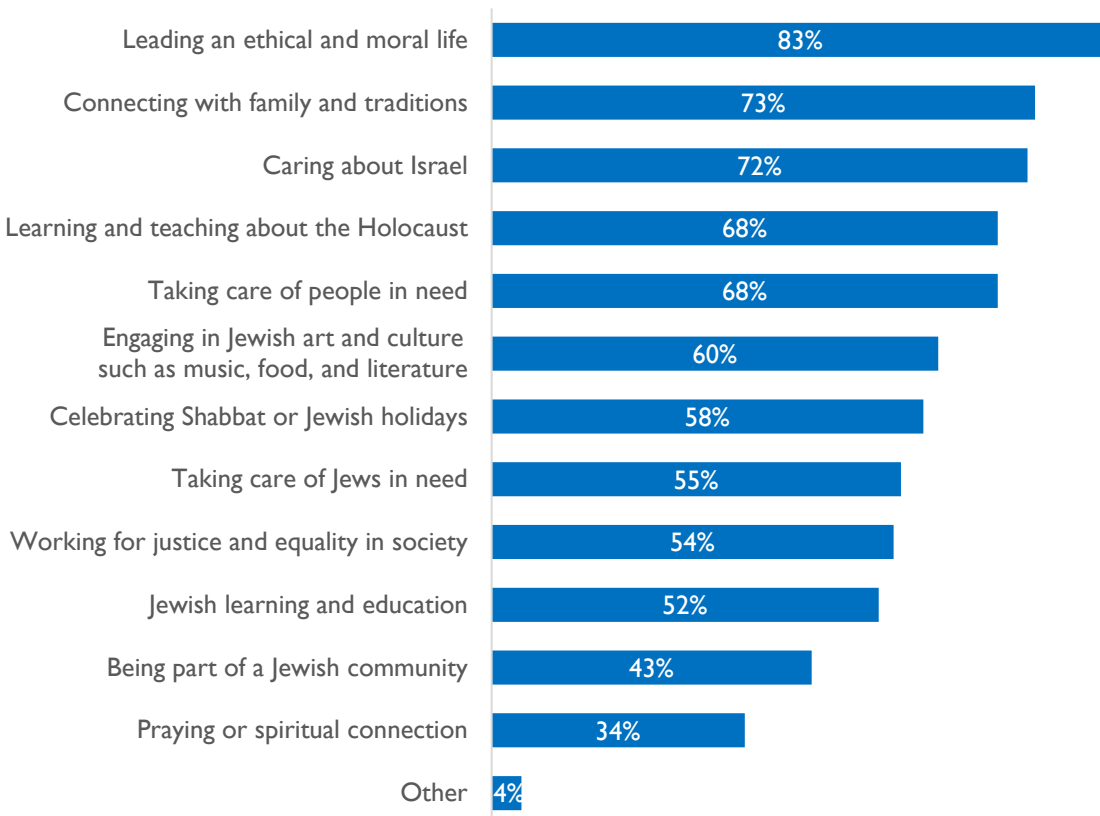


Figure 3.3. Which of the following do you consider to be essential aspects of being Jewish?



Jewish engagement groups

Below, we provide a profile of each engagement group. We show the behaviors that differentiate each group, as well as the differences in the meaning of being Jewish that characterize the groups.

We fill out the portrait of each group with additional details about their Jewish lives provided by members of those groups.

Occasional group

Primary Jewish activities

- participate in a Passover seder (45%)
- light Hanukkah candles (49%)
- donate to a Jewish organization (36%)
- engage Jewishly on social media (39%)

Table 3.5. How do Occasional Jews describe themselves as Jews?

	% of Occasional
Cultural	61%
Secular	28%
Spiritual	25%
Religious	2%

Table 3.6. For Occasional Jews, what is most essential about being Jewish?
(Responses of 50% or more are listed)

	% of Occasional
Leading an ethical and moral life	70%
Learning and teaching about the Holocaust	70%
Taking care of people in need	57%
Engaging in Jewish art and culture such as music, food, and literature	57%
Connecting with family and traditions	54%

In their words:

[The priority should be to] create a sense of unity no matter how you identify yourself to your Jewishness. We need much more in cultural non-religious celebrations and a place to just be.

[The priority should be to] open avenues for “fringe: Jews, like me, to join in...I guess I don’t feel anything more than culturally Jewish, and as such not connected to any “Jewish community.” I guess I don’t feel like I belong. I would like to participate in something Jewish but don’t know how to ease into it...I tried the Merge JCC Senior Men’s meeting once but felt like a fish out of water. They were talking about Israel, and I knew nothing about it. However, that would be a good place to start if it were a bit more welcoming.

Personal group

Primary Jewish activities

- light Hanukkah candles (89%)
- engage Jewishly on social media (68%)
- talk about Jewish topics often (63%)
- follows news about Israel very closely (54%)

Table 3.7. How do Personal Jews describe themselves as Jews?

	% of Personal
Cultural	72
Spiritual	49
Secular	26
Religious	9

Table 3.8. For Personal Jews, what is most essential about being Jewish?

(Responses of 50% or more are listed)

	% of Personal
Leading an ethical and moral life	89
Caring about Israel	86
Taking care of people in need	70
Learning and teaching about the Holocaust	65
Connecting with family and traditions	62
Working for justice and equality in society	60
Engaging in Jewish art and culture such as music, food, and literature	52

In their words:

Promoting Jewish awareness and education for non- synagogue members. Helping to create a sense of Jewish community and identity.

I don't know anybody in Orange County's Jewish community apart from one friend. I would very much like to change that if I could find a group that would welcome me given that I am not particularly religious, but more cultural.

Holiday group

Primary Jewish activities

- light Hanukkah candles (96%)
- attend a Passover seder (84%)
- fast on Yom Kippur (63%)
- donate to a Jewish organization (77%)

Table 3.9. How do Holiday Jews describe themselves as Jews?

	% of Holiday
Cultural	80
Spiritual	52
Secular	39
Religious	20

Table 3.10. For Holiday Jews, what is most essential about being Jewish?
(Responses of 50% or more are listed)

	% of Holiday
Leading an ethical and moral life	86
Connecting with family and traditions	88
Caring about Israel	77
Learning and teaching about the Holocaust	70
Celebrating Shabbat or Jewish holidays	70
Taking care of people in need	68
Engaging in Jewish art and culture such as music, food, and literature	58
Jewish learning and education	57
Taking care of Jews in need	57

In their words:

Creating a sense of connection to Jewish identity. bringing Jews together and making it fun to be Jewish in community.

I feel that we need to take a more holistic approach in our religious school when teaching the kids. They hate going, most of them anyway, and that is because they have no idea why they are there. They need to be taught why religion is important. They need to be taught what religion is—how it can help them in good times and in bad...why do we even have religion? Instead, the first day of kindergarten they are learning about the High Holy days. Teach them what it means to be a Jew, what is a Jew, give them some backstory. We lose too many kids this way, and if we are to be a sustainable religion, we need to turn this around.

Spiritual group

Primary Jewish activities

- attend High Holiday services (98%), although only 36% belong to a congregation
- keep kosher in some way and 100% eat Jewish foods often (87%)
- mark Shabbat monthly or more (67%)
- talk about Jewish topics often (82%)

Table 3.11. How do Spiritual Jews describe themselves as Jews?

	% of Spiritual
Cultural	89
Spiritual	83
Secular	44
Religious	36

Table 3.12. For Spiritual Jews, what is most essential about being Jewish?
(Responses of 50% or more are listed)

	% of Spiritual
Connecting with family and traditions	94
Jewish learning and education	93
Celebrating Shabbat or Jewish holidays	92
Taking care of Jews in need	91
Leading an ethical and moral life	85
Caring about Israel	85
Engaging in Jewish art and culture such as music, food, and literature	84
Taking care of people in need	81
Being part of a Jewish community	78
Learning and teaching about the Holocaust	78
Working for justice and equality in society	64
Praying or spiritual connection	58

In their words:

I have little interest in those who are arrogant or haughty, especially in terms of how much money they have. I have been turned off by some of the people I've met at supposedly Jewish functions when they flaunt their wealth. I grew up in a very Jewish and generous home, and I try to replicate that environment, but I don't see the effort to be generous and kind across the Jewish community in Orange County.

Supporting and taking care of the Jewish community in Orange County, and to a lesser extent America and Israel. Focus on the local first.

As Jews, I believe we have an obligation to speak up and take action against injustice and oppression of all people: immigrants, homeless, and people who are marginalized in our community. There is already so much divisiveness in this country and world, the us versus them attitudes. I believe that our Jewish community should be a voice for tolerance and understanding to those of different faiths and life situations.

Communal group

Primary Jewish activities

- belong to Jewish congregations (99%; 77% belong to informal Jewish groups and 65% belong to Jewish organizations)
- donate to Jewish organizations (100%)

Table 3.13. How do Communal Jews describe themselves as Jews?

	% of Communal
Spiritual	65
Religious	64
Cultural	63
Secular	24

Table 3.14. For Communal Jews, what is most essential about being Jewish?
(Responses of 50% or more are listed)

	% of Communal
Leading an ethical and moral life	90
Taking care of Jews in need	86
Celebrating Shabbat or Jewish holidays	85
Connecting with family and traditions	80
Taking care of people in need	74
Jewish learning and education	74
Caring about Israel	74
Being part of a Jewish community	73
Working for justice and equality in society	60
Praying or spiritual connection	60
Engaging in Jewish art and culture such as music, food, and literature	57
Learning and teaching about the Holocaust	54

In their words:

Finding ways for our Jewish community as a whole to connect to each other outside of any one group or congregation—opportunities to bring people together, including separate opportunities for teens and young adults.

Finding ways to build and preserve a strong Jewish community, both secular and religious, based on obeying a commandment that originated in the Torah and has been the focus of the greatest Jewish philosophers and thinkers from ancient times to the modern era: The Jewish people were created to carry the other as our burden.

Drivers of Jewish engagement

Despite commonly held assumptions about Jewish engagement declining for younger adults, in Orange County we find no significant difference in overall patterns of Jewish engagement for different age groups, although we might find some differences in individual behaviors that contribute to this typology. Similarly, there are no significant differences based on having children, geographic region, or financial situation.

Marital status, including have a Jewish or non-Jewish partner, is associated with different levels of Jewish engagement. For example, in the Occasional group, 40% are intermarried, compared to 25% of the Personal and 19% of the Holiday groups (Table 3.15). A majority of the Spiritual group (79%) are inmarried, and only 1% are intermarried. Over one third of the Communal group is not married.

Table 3.15. Jewish engagement by marriage type

	Inmarried (%)	Intermarried (%)	Not married (%)	Total (%)
All Jewish adults	50	22	28	100
Jewish engagement				
Occasional	29	40	30	100
Personal	49	25	26	100
Holiday	52	19	29	100
Spiritual	79	1	20	100
Communal	59	8	34	100

Attitudes about being Jewish

Most OC Jewish adults, regardless of type of Jewish engagement find being Jewish meaningful and supportive in their lives. The questions explored in the tables below illustrate some of the differences in how the groups think about the role being Jewish has in their lives (Tables 3.16, 3.17, 3.18, 3.19, 3.20, 3.21).

How important is being Jewish in your life?

Table 3.16. Importance of being Jewish in life

	Not at all (%)	Only a little (%)	Moderately (%)	Very (%)	Extremely (%)	Total (%)
All Jewish adults	6	13	24	32	25	100
Jewish engagement						
Occasional	20	34	36	9	<1	100
Personal	<1	8	26	47	19	100
Holiday	0	7	38	31	24	100
Spiritual	0	1	2	39	59	100
Communal	0	<1	3	52	45	100

How much, if at all, do you feel that being Jewish is part of your daily life?

Table 3.17. Being Jewish is part of daily life

	Not at all (%)	Not much (%)	Somewhat (%)	Very much (%)	Total (%)
All Jewish adults	17	26	30	26	100
Jewish engagement					
Occasional	47	42	10	<1	100
Personal	10	30	46	14	100
Holiday	11	32	27	29	100
Spiritual	1	<1	36	63	100
Communal	<1	6	45	49	100

How much, if at all, do you feel that being Jewish helps you to cope at times of crisis?

Table 3.18. Being Jewish helps cope at times of crisis

	Not at all (%)	Not much (%)	Somewhat (%)	Very much (%)	Total (%)
All Jewish adults	20	18	33	29	100
Jewish engagement					
Occasional	60	16	23	<1	100
Personal	7	25	34	34	100
Holiday	4	29	45	21	100
Spiritual	<1	7	38	54	100
Communal	<1	2	32	65	100

How much, if at all, do you feel that being Jewish helps you to celebrate at times of joy?

Table 3.19. Being Jewish helps celebrate at times of joy

	Not at all (%)	Not much (%)	Somewhat (%)	Very much (%)	Total (%)
All Jewish adults	18	11	37	34	100
Jewish engagement					
Occasional	57	12	27	4	100
Personal	7	33	43	17	100
Holiday	2	8	51	39	100
Spiritual	0	<1	29	71	100
Communal	<1	<1	38	62	100

How much, if at all, do you feel that being Jewish guides your major life decisions?

Table 3.20. Being Jewish guides major life decisions

	Not at all (%)	Not much (%)	Somewhat (%)	Very much (%)	Total (%)
All Jewish adults	19	26	34	21	100
Jewish engagement					
Occasional	55	32	13	<1	100
Personal	15	39	27	19	100
Holiday	5	26	45	24	100
Spiritual	<1	14	56	30	100
Communal	<1	10	40	50	100

How much, if at all, do you feel a sense of belonging to the Jewish people?

Table 3.21. Belonging to Jewish people

	Not at all (%)	Not much (%)	Somewhat (%)	Very much (%)	Total (%)
All Jewish adults	7	9	32	53	100
Jewish engagement					
Occasional	21	23	31	25	100
Personal	4	12	42	42	100
Holiday	<1	3	36	61	100
Spiritual	0	<1	24	76	100
Communal	1	<1	20	79	100

CHAPTER 4. CHILDREN AND JEWISH EDUCATION

Jewish children population and demographics

To assess the religious identity of children in Jewish households, parents were asked if they considered their children to be Jewish. Of the 17,200 children who reside in Jewish households in the Orange County Jewish community, 13,300 (77% of all children) are considered Jewish by their parents (Table 4.1). Most of these children are considered Jewish exclusively (8,500, or 49% of all children). Over a quarter of all children in Orange County Jewish households are considered Jewish and another religion (28%).

The children living in Orange County Jewish households who are not considered Jewish are almost evenly split between have no religion and having another religion (11% each).¹⁰

Nationally, 80% of children in Jewish households are considered Jewish, including 69% who are considered exclusively Jewish and 12% who are considered Jewish and another religion. (CDS).

Seventeen percent (17%) of Jewish households in Orange County include a minor child. Nationally, 25% of Jewish households include a minor child (CDS).

Table 4.1. Children in Jewish households

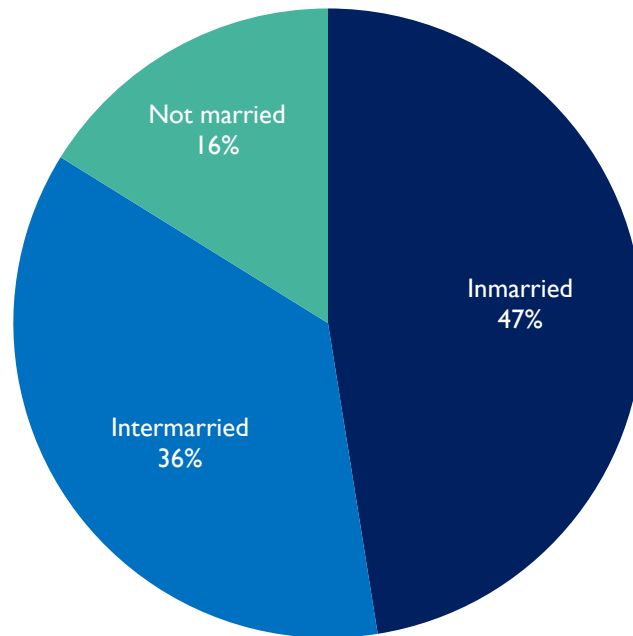
	Overall	Percentage (%)
Jewish children	13,300	77
Jewish	8,500	49
Jewish and another religion	4,800	28
Undetermined Jewish	100	<1
Not Jewish or unknown	3,900	23
No religion	1,800	11
Another religion	1,900	11
Undetermined*	200	1
Total	17,200	100

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

¹⁰ For 1% of children, religious identity was not specified.

Almost half of Orange County Jewish children (47%) are being raised by inmarried parents (two Jewish parents), while 36% are being raised by intermarried parents (one Jewish parent and one non-Jewish parent) (Figure 4.1). The remaining 16% of Orange County Jewish children are living with single parents.

Figure 4.1. Marital status of parents of Jewish children
(% of Jewish children whose parents are...)



Among Jewish children, 28% are between the ages of 0 to 5, and another 39% are between the ages of 6 to 12. The remaining third (33%) are between the ages of 13-17. (Table 4.2).

Table 4.2. Ages of Jewish children

	All Jewish children (%)
	↓
0-5	28
6-12	39
13-17	33
Total	100

Grade level follows a similar pattern (Table 4.3). Twenty-eight percent of Jewish children are not yet in kindergarten, while 31% are in grades kindergarten through fifth grade. Sixteen percent are in grades 6-8 while approximately one quarter (24%) are in grades 9-12.

Table 4.3. Grades of Jewish children

	All Jewish children (%)
	↓
Not yet in kindergarten	28
Kindergarten-Grade 5	31
Grade 6-8	16
Grade 9-12	24
Past high school (e.g., college, gap year)	<1
Not in school	<1
Total	100

Most children live in either the Central/North Orange County region (30%) or the South Orange County region (29%) (Table 4.4). The remaining children live in North/Central Coastal Orange County (23%) and Irvine (18%).

Table 4.4. Region of Jewish children

	All Jewish children (%)
	↓
Central/North Orange County	30
Irvine	18
North/Central Coastal Orange County	23
South Orange County	29
Total	100

K-12 Jewish Education

Jewish education occurs in Jewish preschools; formal classroom settings, such as day schools, yeshivas, and part-time supplementary schools; and informal settings, including camps, youth groups, and peer trips to Israel. Because the vast majority of children in Jewish education are being raised Jewish in some way, the analysis below is restricted to Jewish children. Note that in this section, we use the term “Jewish day school” to refer to Jewish day school and yeshiva.

Overall, 34% of Jewish K-12 students received some type of Jewish education (Table 4.5). Twenty-eight percent of Jewish K-12 students were enrolled in a Jewish school or private tutoring. Of those, 8% were enrolled in day school or yeshiva, 12% were enrolled in a part-time Jewish school, and 12% received tutoring or private classes with Jewish content. With regard to informal education, 6% of K-12 Jewish students participated in a Jewish youth group, and 1% participated in a Jewish volunteer or leadership development program.

Sixteen percent attended Jewish camp in summer 2024. Most of these attended a Jewish day camp (15%) while a smaller number (4%) attended Jewish overnight camp.

Table 4.5. K-12 Jewish education, 2023-24 and summer 2024

	Age-eligible Jewish children (%)
Any Jewish education (K-12)	34
Formal Jewish school (K-12)	28
Jewish day school or yeshiva (K-12)	8
Part-time Jewish school (K-12)	12
Tutoring or private classes (K-12)	12
Other Jewish programs (K-12)	6
Jewish youth group or teen program (K-12)	6
Jewish volunteer or leadership development program (K-12)	1
Any Jewish camp (K-12)	16
Jewish day camp (K-12)	15
Jewish overnight camp (K-12)	4

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

Twenty percent of age-eligible Jewish children have had a bar or bat mitzvah ceremony, and an additional 12% will have one in the future.

Seven percent of Jewish children ages 12 and older have participated in a Jewish travel or immersive program. This share includes 5% in an Israel teen travel program and 3% in a Jewish immersive program not based in Israel.

Young families

Fifteen percent of age-eligible Jewish children are enrolled in a Jewish preschool or daycare program.

The PJ Library and PJ Our Way programs send Jewish books to households with at least one child age 12 or younger. Among eligible households, 20% received books, and 43% were not aware of the program.

In the past year, 43% of households with at least one child age 12 or younger participated in Jewish-sponsored programming outside of school or preschool, such as Tot Shabbat, synagogue-based playgroups, or family holiday programs.

CHAPTER 5. CONGREGATIONS AND RITUAL LIFE

Jewish congregations

About one quarter of OC Jewish **households** (27%) belong to a Jewish congregation—regardless of whether they pay dues (Table 5.1). Thirty percent of Jewish **adults** live in a household with a congregation member. This household membership rate is higher than Los Angeles (21%), Long Beach (20%), or San Diego (14%). Among all US Jewish **adults**, 35% live in a household with a congregation member.¹¹

Jewish congregations include a synagogue, temple, *minyan*, or *chavurah*. Congregation membership does not always require dues. Just 8% of OC Jewish households pay dues to a congregation. The gap reflects the participation in Chabad: 41% of congregation-member households (10% of all OC Jewish households) belong to Chabad, which does not have a traditional dues structure.

Table 5.1. Membership in Jewish congregations

All Jewish households (%)	
	↓
Congregation member	27
OC congregation member	23
Pays dues to any synagogue	8

There is a relationship between a household’s financial situation and congregational membership. Among households that are financially struggling and those that have enough money, about 20% are members of congregations (Table 5.2). The largest share of membership is among the group with extra money, with 43% of that group belonging to a congregation. Among the well off, just 15% are congregation members. For this group, finances are not likely to be a barrier for membership; therefore, the low membership rate likely reflects a lack of interest in the available options.

¹¹ Pew Research Center, “Jewish Americans in 2020.”

^{vi} Pew Research Center, “Jewish Americans in 2020.”

Table 5.2. Membership in Jewish congregations by financial status

	OC congregation member (%)	Pays dues to any synagogue (%)
All Jewish households	23	8
Financial situation		
Struggling	20	8
Enough	21	9
Extra	43	10
Well off	15	9

Because congregation membership is one of the markers of Jewish engagement, it is a distinguishing characteristic of the Jewish engagement groups. Virtually all members of the Communal group (98%) belong to a congregation, and over half (53%) pay dues to a synagogue (Table 5.3). Conversely, virtually no members of the Occasional or Personal groups belong to a congregation. For the Holiday and Spiritual groups, just under half (45% and 43%, respectively) belong to a congregation; however, much smaller shares (12% and 3%) pay dues.

Table 5.3. Membership in Jewish congregations by Jewish engagement group

	Congregation member (%)	OC congregation member (%)	Pays dues to any synagogue (%)
All Jewish households	27	23	8
Jewish engagement			
Occasional	<1	<1	<1
Personal	0	0	0
Holiday	45	43	12
Spiritual	43	37	3
Communal	98	73	53

Religious service attendance

Sixty percent of OC Jewish adults attended services at least once in the past year, including 23% who attended monthly or more frequently (Table 5.4). Forty-one percent attended High Holiday services in 2024. In terms of location, the largest share attended a service at a synagogue in Orange County (38%) or a Chabad in Orange County (24%) (Table 5.5).

Table 5.4. Attendance at Jewish services during past year

	All Jewish adults (%)
	↓
Never	40
Occasionally	37
Monthly or more	23
Total	100
Attended High Holiday services 2024	41

Table 5.5. Jewish service attendance location

	All Jewish adults (%)
	↓
Ever attended services	60
Synagogue in Orange County	38
Chabad in Orange County	24
Synagogue outside of Orange County	13
Community organization	11
Independent minyan or chavurah	8
Chabad outside of Orange County	2

As we would expect, nearly all congregation members attended services at least occasionally, and 86% attended on High Holidays (Table 5.6). However, even among non-members, service attendance is not unusual: 38% attend occasionally, 6% monthly or more, and 22% attended on High Holidays. Service attendance is one of the markers of Jewish engagement; 95% of the Occasional group never attend services compared to 87% of the Communal group who attend monthly or more (Table 5.7).

Table 5.6. Attendance at Jewish services during past year by congregation membership

	Never (%)	Occasionally (%)	Monthly or more (%)	Total (%)	Attended High Holiday services 2024 (%)
All Jewish adults	40	37	23	100	41
Congregation member					
Not a member	56	38	6	100	22
Member	1	36	63	100	86

Table 5.7. Attendance at Jewish services during past year by Jewish engagement

	Never (%)	Occasionally (%)	Monthly or more (%)	Total (%)	Attended High Holiday services 2024 (%)
All Jewish adults	40	37	23	100	41
Jewish engagement					
Occasional	95	5	0	100	0
Personal	58	40	2	100	<1
Holiday	6	76	18	100	53
Spiritual	<1	64	36	100	98
Communal	0	13	87	100	>99

Shabbat observance

While congregations are sites of religious life, many other holiday and ritual observances occur either at home or in other settings. Observance of Shabbat is a marker of religious life that does not require congregational membership. Of Jewish adults in Orange County, 25% marked Shabbat every week or almost every week, 12% marked Shabbat at least once a month, 27% marked Shabbat occasionally, while the remaining 36% never marked Shabbat (Table 5.8).

Very few Jewish adults (9%) in the Occasional group celebrated Shabbat, while 58% of the Personal group celebrated Shabbat at least occasionally. Almost half of the Holiday engagement group and two thirds of the Spiritual group celebrated Shabbat at least monthly, while two thirds of the Communal group celebrated Shabbat almost every week.

Table 5.8. Mark Shabbat frequency by Jewish engagement

	Never (%)	Occasionally (%)	At least once a month but not every week (%)	Every week or almost every week (%)	Total (%)
All Jewish adults	36	27	12	25	100
Jewish engagement					
Occasional	91	9	0	0	100
Personal	42	52	1	5	100
Holiday	17	37	18	27	100
Spiritual	2	31	22	45	100
Communal	1	11	23	65	100

Among the different ways that Orange County Jewish adults marked Shabbat, the most common were lighting Shabbat candles (46%), having a special meal or eating special foods (42%), or spending time with family or friends (39%) (Table 5.9).

Table 5.9. Shabbat activities, past year

	All Jewish adults (%)
Light Shabbat candles	46
Have a special meal or special foods	42
Spend time with family or friends	39
Attend religious services	30
Take a break from work	27
Meditation or spiritual	23
Jewish learning or reading	15
Take a break from technology	12
Attend Shabbat programs other than services	10
Something else	3

Holidays

Holiday and ritual behaviors are another way that Jewish adults express their Jewishness. Most Jews light Hanukkah candles (82%) and participate in a Passover seder (67%) while smaller numbers fast on Yom Kippur (37%) or follow any kosher rules (37%) (Table 5.10).

Like other ritual behaviors, there were significant differences in holiday ritual behavior and kosher practices by Jewish engagement group. Almost half of the Jews in the Occasional engagement group lit Hanukkah candles (49%) and participated in a Passover seder (45%), while very few of this group fasted on Yom Kippur (1%) or kept any form of kashrut (6%). Lighting Hanukkah candles was very common among the other four groups, while the Personal group was notably lower in their participation in Passover seders (47%). Fasting for Yom Kippur and following any kosher rules was most prevalent in the Spiritual group.

Table 5.10. Holidays and rituals by Jewish engagement

	Light Hanukkah candles (%)	Seder, 2024 (%)	Fasted for Yom Kippur, 2024* (%)	Keep any kosher rules (%)
All Jewish adults	82	67	37	37
Jewish engagement				
Occasional	49	45	1	6
Personal	89	47	28	11
Holiday	96	84	55	31
Spiritual	100	85	66	87
Communal	97	90	59	67

*An additional 16% did not fast for medical reasons.

CHAPTER 6. COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS, PROGRAMS, AND ACTIVITIES

Communities and friends in Orange County

Community connections can serve as gateways to participation in Jewish life. The study asked about Jewish and non-Jewish community connections, both within and outside of Orange County.

Among OC Jews, 22% feel very much a part of a community in Orange County (Table 6.1). The largest source of community is through friends (66%) and through parental participation in children's activities (52%) (Table 6.2).

Table 6.1. Feel part of any community in Orange County

	Feel part of any community in OC (%)
Very much	22
Somewhat	29
A little	29
Not at all	19
Total	100

Note: Question text: "Many think of a *community* as a group of people you see regularly, to whom you feel emotionally connected, and who welcome, include, and value you. With that in mind, to what extent do you feel part of a community anywhere in Orange County?"

Table 6.2. Community type in Orange County

	All Jewish adults (%)
Friends	66
Children's activities (among parents)	52
Family	43
Club	34
Neighborhood or town	34
Jewish organization or group	31
Other	<1

Twenty-four percent of Jewish adults say they feel that they very much belong to a Jewish community anywhere, and 32% feel that they somewhat belong to a Jewish community anywhere (Table 6.3).

Table 6.3. Sense of belonging to any Jewish community

	Belonging to any Jewish community (%)	Belonging to a Jewish community where you live (%)	Belonging to a Jewish community not where you live (%)
Very much	24	14	16
Somewhat	32	25	26
Not much	13	23	16
Not at all	30	38	41
Total	100	100	100

To illustrate the importance of Jewish community, 43% of OC Jewish adults feel that being part of a Jewish community is an essential aspect of being Jewish (See chapter 3 for details). As shown above in Table 6.2, 31% of OC Jewish adults feel that one of the communities that they connect to is a Jewish organization or group.

Jewish friends

Individual Jewish connections can be as or more important than connections to communities as indicators of Jewish identity.

In OC, one quarter of Jewish adults say that most (24%) or all (1%) of their close friends are Jewish, and another half of Jewish adults (49%) say that some of their close friends are Jewish. Just 7% of Jewish adults have no close Jewish friends (Table 6.4).

Table 6.4. Close friends are Jewish

	All Jewish adults (%)
All of them	1
Most of them	24
Some of them	49
Hardly any of them	19
None of them	7
Total	100

Jewish community connections and Jewish engagement

Jewish community connections and Jewish friendships are significantly higher in the Spiritual and Communal engagement groups than those in the other engagement groups (Table 6.5). In particular, the Communal group, with its high rate of belonging and participating in Jewish organizations, feel the strongest connections to the local Jewish community (46% very much belong), and half of this group say that most of all of their close friends are Jewish (Table 6.6).

Table 6.5. Belonging to a Jewish community where you live by Jewish engagement

	Not at all (%)	A little (%)	Somewhat (%)	Very much (%)	Total (%)
All Jewish adults	38	23	25	14	100
Jewish engagement					
Occasional	68	27	5	<1	100
Personal	59	29	10	3	100
Holiday	21	28	39	13	100
Spiritual	10	16	50	25	100
Communal	2	9	42	46	100

Table 6.6. Close friends are Jewish by Jewish engagement group

	None of them (%)	Hardly any of them (%)	Some of them (%)	Most of them (%)	All of them (%)	Total (%)
All Jewish adults	7	19	49	24	1	100
Jewish engagement						
Occasional	16	32	44	6	2	100
Personal	9	12	55	24	<1	100
Holiday	2	22	49	26	1	100
Spiritual	<1	15	52	32	1	100
Communal	2	1	46	49	2	100

Jewish community connections by marriage and family status

Community connections are much stronger for inmarried Jewish adults than for intermarried and unmarried adults. In particular, among intermarried Jewish adults, 63% feel no connection to the OC Jewish community, 15% have no close Jewish friends, and 38% say that hardly any of their close friends are Jewish (Table 6.7, 6.8).

Table 6.7. Belonging to a Jewish community where you live by marriage status

	Not at all (%)	A little (%)	Somewhat (%)	Very much (%)	Total (%)
All Jewish adults	38	23	25	14	100
Relationship status					
Inmarried	25	18	36	20	100
Intermarried	63	21	10	6	100
Not married	40	32	20	9	100

Table 6.8. Close friends are Jewish by marriage status

	None of them (%)	Hardly any of them (%)	Some of them (%)	Most of them (%)	All of them (%)	Total (%)
All Jewish adults	7	19	49	24	1	100
Relationship status						
Inmarried	1	7	56	35	2	100
Intermarried	15	38	38	9	<1	100
Not married	13	23	45	19	<1	100

Jewish connections by age

Although there are no significant age differences in the feeling of belonging to a local Jewish community, age differences in friendship patterns are pronounced. Among Jewish adults ages 75 and older, 47% say that most or all of their close friends are Jewish. In contrast, for those ages 22 to 44, 16% say that most or all of their close friends are Jewish, and among 45 to 54, 15% say most or all of their close friends are Jewish (Table 6.9).

Table 6.9. Close friends are Jewish by age

	None of them (%)	Hardly any of them (%)	Some of them (%)	Most of them (%)	All of them (%)	Total (%)
All Jewish adults	7	19	49	24	1	100
Age						
22-44	3	24	58	15	<1	100
45-54	9	8	69	14	<1	100
55-64	16	21	33	27	4	100
65-74	2	9	54	35	<1	100
75+	4	13	36	44	3	100

Jewish-sponsored programs

In the past year, almost two thirds of Jewish adults participated in at least one Jewish program; 37% never participated in a Jewish program.

Table 6.10. Participation in Jewish programs

	Never (%)	Rarely (%)	Sometimes (%)	Often (%)	Total (%)
All Jewish adults	37	24	24	14	100

Overall, cultural programs were the most popular with Jewish adults, with 55% attending at least one cultural program and 32% attending a Jewish-sponsored cultural program (Table 6.11). The second most common type of programs were educational, with 60% attending at least one educational program and 36% attending a Jewish-sponsored educational program. The most common Jewish program sponsors were congregations (27%) and Chabad (22%) (Table 6.12).

Table 6.11. Participation by program type and Jewish sponsorship (% of Jewish adults)

	Any participation (%)	Any participation in Jewish programs (%)	Both Jewish and non-Jewish organizations (%)	Jewish organizations only (%)	Non-Jewish organizations only (%)
Any program type	87	63	51	12	24
Program type					
Cultural	66	32	23	8	36
Educational	60	36	21	15	23
Social	49	23	16	7	27
Social action	48	21	13	8	27
Religious (aside from religious service)	39	32	8	24	7
Outdoors or active	38	8	4	4	29
Political	21	14	7	7	7

Table 6.12. Jewish program sponsor

	All Jewish adults (%)
A congregation or synagogue in Orange County	27
A Chabad in Orange County	22
Merage JCC	17
Israel-related organizations	12
Jewish Federation of Orange County	11
JFCS Long Beach & West Orange County	5
Jewish young adult organization in Orange County (under age 40)	4
Hillel and other Jewish schools (write-in)	4
Other	1

Jewish programs and marriage and family status

Reinforcing the patterns shown above with respect to feelings of belonging to the local Jewish community, intermarried households have significantly lower rates of participation in Jewish programs (Table 6.13).

Table 6.13. Participation in Jewish programs by marriage type

	Never (%)	Rarely (%)	Sometimes (%)	Often (%)	Total (%)
All Jewish adults	37	24	24	14	100
Relationship status					
Inmarried	23	28	32	17	100
Intermarried	66	18	11	5	100
Not married	39	24	21	16	100

Interest, satisfaction, and barriers

When asked about their overall satisfaction with OC Jewish life, 21% of OC Jews are very satisfied, 37% somewhat satisfied, 30% not too satisfied and 12% not at all satisfied. These responses indicate room for improvement in OC Jewish life (Table 6.14).

Of those who never participate in Jewish programs, nearly half are dissatisfied (13% not at all satisfied, 31% not too satisfied) with their level of participation and may be looking for more or different opportunities. Of those who rarely participate, there is even more room for growth: 16% are not at all satisfied, and 43% are not too satisfied. The highlighted box in Table 6.14 indicates these areas for potential improvement.

Table 6.14. Satisfaction by level of participation

Frequency of participation	Not at all satisfied (%)	Not too satisfied (%)	Somewhat satisfied (%)	Very satisfied (%)	Total (%)
All Jewish adults	12	30	37	21	100
Never	13	31	36	20	100
Rarely	16	43	31	9	100
Sometimes	10	21	50	19	100
Often	6	16	34	44	100

About two thirds of Jewish adults (63%) participated in at least one program in the past year (Table 6.15). Of those who did not participate, more than half were not interested in participating (18% not at all, 45% not much) and the remainder were somewhat (32%) or very (5%) interested. This again, suggests that there is some room for new or increased participation in Jewish programs and activities among those who never participate.

Table 6.15. Participation and interest in participating in OC Jewish programs

	All Jewish adults (%)	Of Jewish adults who did not participate (%)
	↓	↓
Participated in program in the past year	63	--
Did not participate	37	--
Not at all interested	7	18
Not much	17	45
Somewhat	12	32
Very	2	5
Total	100	100

Of those who were not at all interested in Jewish programs, being too busy, disinterested, or not connected were cited as reasons in write-in responses (31).

OC Jewish adults were asked factors that encourage or are barriers to participation. The most important consideration in participation is knowing others who will be there. For 79% of Jewish adults, knowing others in attendance helps them feel welcome and comfortable; for 42% of Jewish adults, not knowing anyone is a barrier to participating (Tables 6.16, 6.17). Further supporting the importance of individual connections, 58% said that a personal invitation helps them feel more comfortable.

Table 6.16. Feel welcome and comfortable at Jewish events

	All Jewish adults (%)
When you know other people there	79
When someone personally invites you	58
When you see yourself reflected in the people who attend	48
When Jewish rituals are explained	39
When people with diverse backgrounds attend	36
When events have no religious components	25
When policies around inclusion and diversity are made explicit	24
When you are encouraged to take a leadership role	15
Something else	5

Table 6.17. Barriers to participation

	All Jewish adults (%)
You don't know many people	42
You haven't found Jewish programs that interest you	22
Location not convenient	19
It's too expensive	19
Safety/security concerns	15
You are not confident in your Jewish knowledge	15
You feel unwelcome	15
Lack of accessibility for people with disabilities and/or other needs	1

Jewish programs and marriage and family status

There were significant differences in Jewish program participation based on family status. Participation in programs was lower among intermarried Jewish adults (34%) than inmarried (76%) or single Jewish adults (61%), and many intermarried Jewish adults were not interested in participating (Table 6.18). Nonetheless, one-in-five intermarried Jewish adults did not currently participate in programs but were somewhat (19%) or very (2%) interested in participating.

Sixty-six percent of parents of minor children participated in Jewish programs, but another 26% said they were at least somewhat interested in participating (Table 6.19).

Table 6.18. Interest in participating in Jewish programs

	Participated in program (%)	Not at all interested (%)	Not much interest (%)	Somewhat interested (%)	Very much interested (%)	Total (%)
All Jewish adults	63	7	17	12	2	100
Relationship status						
Inmarried	76	3	12	7	1	100
Intermarried	34	15	30	19	2	100
Not married	61	6	13	16	4	100

Table 6.19. Interest in participating in Jewish programs

	Participated in program (%)	Not at all interested (%)	Not much interest (%)	Somewhat interested (%)	Very much interested (%)	Total (%)
All Jewish adults	63	7	17	12	2	100
Minor child in household						
No	62	7	18	10	2	100
Yes	66	1	7	26	<1	100

Some of the barriers to participation were more pronounced for Jewish intermarried and single adults. As noted above (Table 6.8), these are the groups with the fewest numbers of close Jewish friends. Most notably, almost half (47%) of Jewish intermarried adults and more than half (57%) of Jewish single adults said that they did not participate in Jewish programs because they did not know others who participated. Among intermarried Jewish adults, 31% did not participate because they were not confident in their Jewish knowledge. It is important to consider ways that programs can be made accessible for participants at all levels of Jewish knowledge.

Table 6.20. Barriers to participation by marriage type

	Inmarried (%)	Intermarried (%)	Not married (%)
You don't know many people	32	47	57
You haven't found Jewish programs that interest you	22	26	20
Location not convenient	21	11	20
It's too expensive	17	20	24
Safety/security concerns	18	11	13
You are not confident in your Jewish knowledge	6	31	19
You feel unwelcome	9	22	23
Lack of accessibility for people with disabilities and/or other needs	<1	<1	5

Jewish programs and age

In order to encourage participation among Jews of all ages, it can be valuable to consider differences in the welcoming conditions and barriers by age group. For younger Jewish adults (ages 22-44), some of the greatest barriers to participation in Jewish programs are not knowing others (63%), too expensive (36%), not finding interesting programs (31%), and not confident in Jewish knowledge (29%) (Tables 6.21, 6.22). As noted above (Table 6.9), the younger age groups had the fewest numbers of close Jewish friends.

Table 6.21. Feel welcome and comfortable at Jewish events

	22-44 (%)	45-54 (%)	55-64 (%)	65-74 (%)	75+ (%)
When you know other people there	83	91	64	76	88
When someone personally invites you	74	32	40	60	63
When you see yourself reflected in the people	57	57	41	41	44
When Jewish rituals are explained	43	35	31	39	34
When people with diverse backgrounds attend	45	27	16	29	41
When events have no religious components	30	12	13	39	29
When policies around inclusion and diversity are made explicit	38	13	6	26	16
When you are encouraged to take a leadership role	19	13	17	14	12
Something else	5	<1	2	1	1

Table 6.22. Barriers to participation by age group

	22-44 (%)	45-54 (%)	55-64 (%)	65-74 (%)	75+ (%)
You don't know many people	63	19	26	37	32
You haven't found Jewish programs that interest you	31	7	19	16	25
Location not convenient	22	15	13	22	19
It's too expensive	36	11	9	15	7
Safety/security concerns	19	11	12	14	15
You are not confident in your Jewish knowledge	29	7	5	8	1
You feel unwelcome	23	6	15	9	3
Lack of accessibility for people with disabilities and/or other needs	2	<1	<1	2	1

Finances as a barrier

The level of participation in Jewish programs is similar for Jewish adults regardless of financial status. However, those Jewish adults who are less financially secure but are not participating in Jewish programs indicate more interest in increasing their participation (Table 6.23). It is somewhat surprising that there are no significant differences across financial groups in terms of the share who consider expense to be a barrier to participation. See chapter 11 of this report for more details about the impact of finances on Jewish life.

Table 6.23. Interest in participating in Jewish programs

	Participated in program (%)	Not at all interested (%)	Not much interest (%)	Somewhat interested (%)	Very much interested (%)	Total (%)	Program expense is a barrier to participation
All Jewish adults	63	7	17	12	2	100	19
Financial situation							
Struggling	68	2	17	10	3	100	28
Enough	59	10	11	20	<1	100	16
Extra	63	1	34	1	1	100	20
Well off	64	15	9	7	4	100	10

In their words:

Inflation has been a strain on my budget. JCC membership has gone up 30% over the last three years. I plan on canceling my membership.

Unfortunately, membership and events can be quite expensive. It's a shame, my son almost didn't have a bar mitzva because of the expense.

I often find Jewish activities to be outside of my budget, too expensive for me. They are not for lower income people/families, so I often don't participate. Most of the Jews that I know are in a higher income bracket than I am and can more easily afford to participate. It would be nice if there were some thought and accommodation [in recognition of this fact].

Jewish-focused activities outside of organizations

The next section considers ways that Jewish adults participate in Jewish life in their homes, with friends and families, not necessarily in the context of Jewish groups and programs (Table 6.24). Over the past year, most OC Jewish adults talked with family or friends about Jewish topics (97%); ate Jewish foods, aside from Shabbat and holiday meals (93%); read books, watched movies or TV, or listened to music that is Jewish-focused (86%); or read Jewish publications (83%). Over half of Jewish adults had studied or learned Jewish texts in the past year (53%).

Table 6.24. Jewish-focused non-organizational activities, past year

	Ever All Jewish adults (%)	Often All Jewish adults (%)
Talked with family or friends about Jewish topics	97	48
Ate Jewish foods, aside from Shabbat and holiday meals	93	33
Read books, watched movies or TV, or listened to music that is Jewish-focused	86	25
Read Jewish publications, including articles, magazines, and newsletters from a Jewish organization	83	28
Studied or learned Jewish texts	53	7

Social media is one of the growing sites of Jewish life, and two thirds of OC Jewish adults (66%) participate in Jewish-focused social media activities in some way¹² (Table 6.25).

Table 6.25. Jewish-focused social media activities, past year

	All Jewish adults (%)
Any social media	66
Read or view content on Jewish life	60
Follow or belong to an online group with Jewish content	48
Post about Jewish life on social media	28

Participation in these types of activities varies significantly across the Jewish engagement groups and is one of the markers of the Jewish engagement typology. In some activities, Jews in all engagement groups participated in similar shares, but frequent participation was much higher than for some groups than for others.

For example, nearly all Jewish adults in all engagement groups talk about Jewish topics and eat Jewish foods at least occasionally (Table 6.26). However, the Personal group does all of these activities more frequently than the Holiday group does. The Spiritual group talks about Jewish topics, eats Jewish foods, and engages in Jewish cultural activities (books, movies, music) more often than the Communal group does.

¹² Note that these Jewish social media activities might not include specific activities related to the Israel-Hamas war (see Table 8.14).

Table 6.26. Jewish-focused activities, past year, by Jewish engagement

	Occasional (%)		Personal (%)		Holiday (%)		Spiritual (%)		Communal (%)	
	Ever	Often	Ever	Often	Ever	Often	Ever	Often	Ever	Often
Talked with family or friends about Jewish topics	93	6	100	63	94	43	100	82	100	76
Ate Jewish foods, aside from Shabbat and holiday meals	79	4	99	23	95	11	100	100	100	42
Read books, watched movies or TV, or listened to music that is Jewish-focused	50	<1	100	36	95	12	100	61	100	34
Read Jewish publications, including articles, magazines, and newsletters from a Jewish organization	40	0	99	51	97	10	>99	42	>99	59
Studied or learned Jewish texts	2	0	58	1	54	1	94	5	90	37

CHAPTER 7. SUPPORT FOR JEWISH ORGANIZATIONS

OC Jewish households have many ways to connect with local Jewish organizations. Chapter 5 describes membership and participation in congregations and synagogues; Chapter 6 describes participation in Jewish-sponsored programs and activities. This chapter describes the ways Jewish adults support local Jewish organizations through volunteering, philanthropy, and membership as well their views with respect to the performance of local Jewish organizations.

Volunteering and donating

About half of Jewish adults have volunteered in the past year, with 8% volunteering for Jewish organizations only, 21% for non-Jewish organizations only, and 19% with both Jewish and non-Jewish organizations (Table 7.1). Among OC Jewish adults, 13% currently work for or hold a leadership position in at least one local Jewish organization.

About one third of OC Jewish adults (37%) report that they have been asked to donate to a Jewish organization, and 8% have been asked to take on a volunteer or leadership role (not shown in table).

Table 7.1. Volunteering, past year

	Any volunteering (%)	Any Jewish volunteering (%)	Both Jewish and non-Jewish organizations (%)	Jewish organizations only (%)	Non-Jewish organizations only (%)	Work for or hold leadership position in local Jewish organization (%)
All Jewish adults	48	27	19	8	21	13

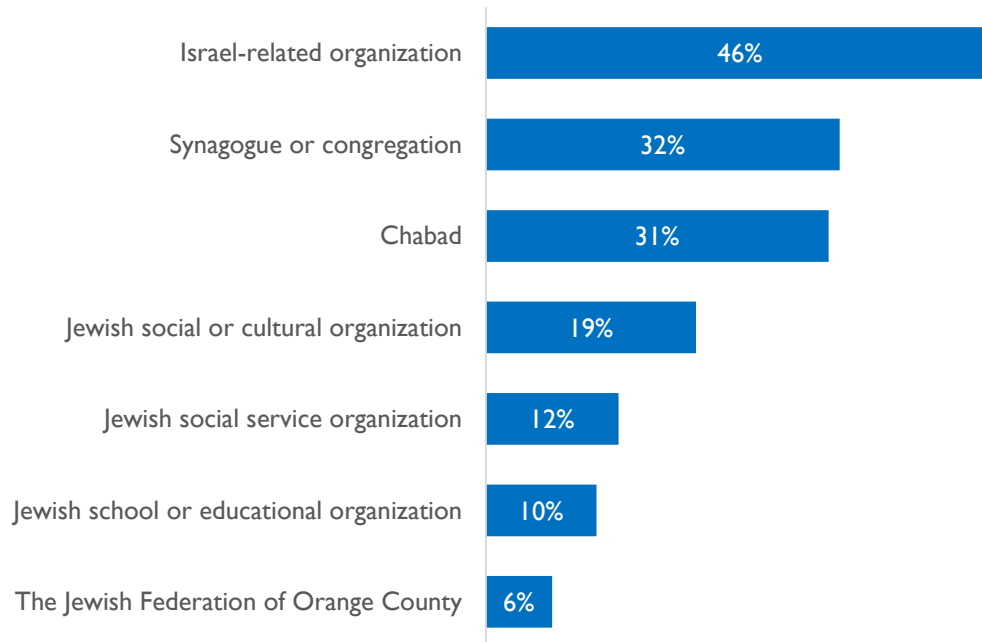
Among all OC Jewish households, 82% donated to at least one charitable organization; 59% donated to at least one Jewish organization (Table 7.2). Half of all OC households have donated to both Jewish and non-Jewish organizations in the past year (50%), and another 9% of households donated to only Jewish organizations. One quarter of Jewish adults (24%) donated only to non-Jewish organizations.

Table 7.2. Charitable donations, past year

	Any donations (%)	Any Jewish donations (%)	Both Jewish and non-Jewish organizations (%)	Jewish organizations only (%)	Non-Jewish organizations only (%)
All Jewish households	82	59	50	9	24

Although many organizations are supported by the Jewish community, the largest share of Jewish charitable donations went to Israel-related organizations (46%), synagogues and congregations (32%), and Chabad (31%) (Figure 7.1).

Figure 7.1. Jewish donations by organization type

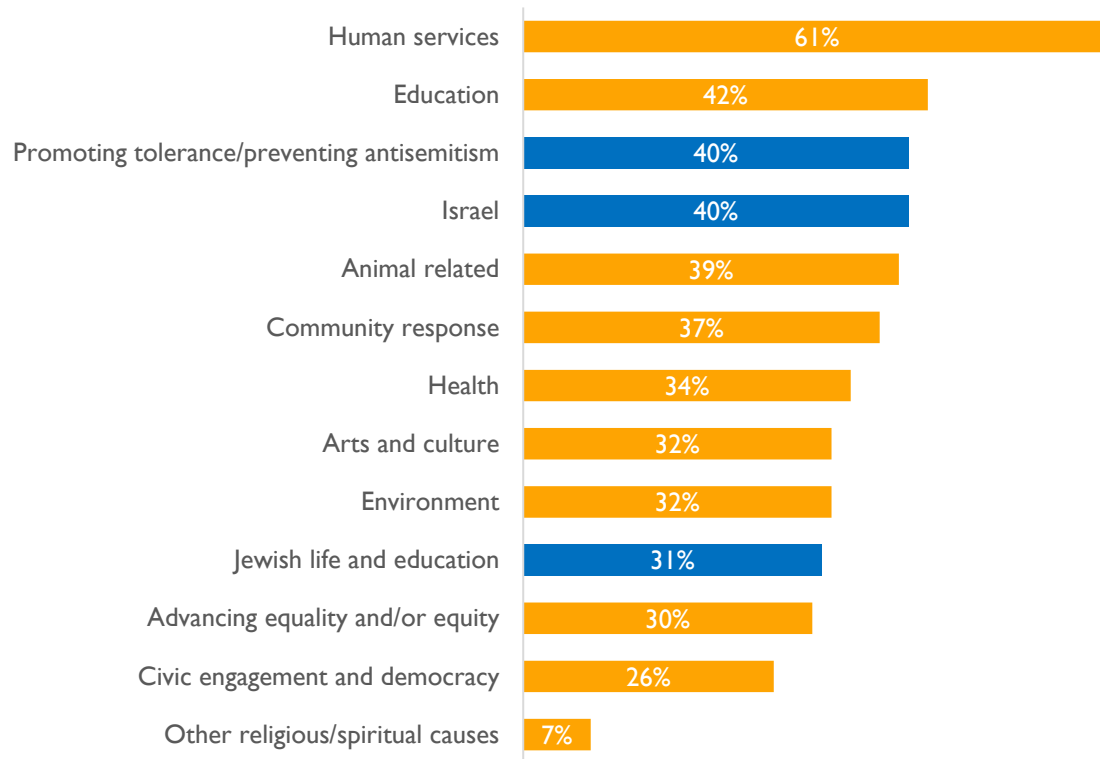


Causes of interest

When thinking about where they might volunteer or make a charitable contribution, community members support both Jewish and non-Jewish causes (Figure 7.2). Human service needs (61%) garner the largest share of Jewish adults' interest. Specifically Jewish causes include promoting tolerance and preventing antisemitism (40%), Israel (40%), and Jewish life and education (31%).

Figure 7.2. Important causes

Jewish causes indicated in blue



Volunteering, donating, and Jewish engagement

Two of the markers of Jewish engagement, volunteering and charitable giving, differ by Jewish engagement group (Tables 7.3, 7.4). Consistent with their high levels of organizational involvement, the Communal engagement group has a high rate of volunteering in both Jewish and non-Jewish organizations (54%) and in Jewish organizations only (19%).

It is noteworthy that at least one quarter of Jewish adults in the Occasional group volunteer and donate; but they do so with non-Jewish rather than Jewish organizations.

Table 7.3. Volunteering, past year, by Jewish engagement

	Any volunteering (%)	Any Jewish volunteering (%)	Both Jewish and non- Jewish organizations (%)	Jewish organizations only (%)	Non-Jewish organizations only (%)	Work for or hold leadership position in local Jewish organization (%)
All Jewish adults	48	27	19	8	21	13
Jewish engagement						
Occasional	25	<1	<1	0	25	<1
Personal	43	9	9	<1	33	<1
Holiday	54	32	22	12	21	4
Spiritual	48	41	25	16	7	32
Communal	80	73	54	19	7	41

Table 7.4. Charitable donations, past year, by Jewish engagement

	Any donations (%)	Any Jewish donations (%)	Both Jewish and non- Jewish organizations (%)	Jewish organizations only (%)	Non-Jewish organizations only (%)	None/ Don't know (%)	Total (%)
All Jewish households	82	59	50	9	24	18	100
Jewish engagement							
Occasional	70	28	28	<1	43	30	100
Personal	77	53	43	10	25	23	100
Holiday	91	76	66	10	14	9	100
Spiritual	99	93	79	14	6	<1	100
Communal	98	98	76	22	<1	2	100

Volunteering, donating, and financial situation

There are no statistically significant differences in levels of volunteering by financial situation. However, as we might expect, there are differences by financial situation in contributions to charitable organizations (Table 7.5). The majority of households of all financial means, including those who are financially struggling, make financial donations to both Jewish and non-Jewish organizations. Among those who are well off, nearly all make donations, although the share of the well-off group making donations to Jewish organizations is smaller than those with “enough” and “extra” money.

Table 7.5. Charitable donations, past year, by financial situation

	Any donations (%)	Any Jewish donations (%)	Both Jewish and non-Jewish organizations (%)	Jewish organizations only (%)	Non-Jewish organizations only (%)	None/Don't know (%)	Total (%)
All Jewish households	82	59	50	9	24	18	100
Financial situation							
Struggling	69	47	37	10	22	31	100
Enough	84	66	58	8	18	16	100
Extra	87	64	55	9	23	13	100
Well off	98	57	48	9	41	2	100

Jewish organizations

Twenty-five percent (25%) of Jewish households belong to any Jewish organization—including an informal or grassroots Jewish group (17%), a Jewish organization (15%), or the Merage JCC (3%) (Table 7.6).

Table 7.6. Membership in Jewish organizations

	Any organization (%)	Informal or grassroots Jewish group (%)	Jewish organization aside from Merage JCC (%)	Merage JCC (%)
All Jewish households	25	17	15	3

Outreach from Jewish organizations

In addition to supporting Jewish organizations, many community members also would welcome hearing from organizations about ways to contribute. Fifty-three percent of OC Jewish adults said that an organization engaged in personal outreach to them (Table 7.7). Just over one third of Jewish adults (37%) were asked for donations, and 33% were invited to participate in a program or activity. Jewish adults who participate in Jewish programs more often were more likely to hear from organizations in any of these ways. They may hear from organizations because they are known to those organizations; conversely, it is possible that these individuals participate more because they receive more outreach.

Table 7.7. Personal outreach

	Any of these (%)	Ask you for a financial donation (%)	Invite you to participate in program/activity (%)	Find out how you are doing (%)	Ask you to serve on a committee and/or in a leadership role (%)	Offer or provide assistance (%)
All Jewish adults	53	37	33	18	8	6
Frequency of participation, past year						
Never	28	22	13	3	2	1
Rarely	45	33	24	13	3	7
Sometimes	80	53	65	32	13	13
Often	87	61	47	41	26	5

Rating of Jewish organizations

Close to half of OC Jewish adults were unable to rate OC Jewish organizations on specific items asked about in the survey, including responses to political issues and organizational qualities. This finding likely reflects a lack of familiarity with or interest in Jewish organizations. For those who did offer an option, the majority on all of these measures were positive (Table 7.8).

Table 7.8. Rating Orange County Jewish organizations (all Jewish adults)

	Very negative (%)	Somewhat negative (%)	Somewhat positive (%)	Very positive (%)	Don't know (%)	Total (%)
Response to the Israel-Hamas war	3	9	18	17	52	100
Response to antisemitism in the United States	4	14	20	17	45	100
Cooperation across organizations	1	6	19	8	66	100
Creativity and fresh thinking	5	9	22	9	56	100
Effective use of community resources	<1	9	21	12	59	100
Meeting the needs of community members	2	9	30	10	50	100

It is possible that Jewish organizations may feel more welcoming to some segments of the community than to others. The survey asked about the degree to which various members of the community feel welcome. Although the questions in Table 7.9 were asked of everyone, the responses shown below represent only members of those groups of the community.

The majority of adults in households in which someone has a disability or special need (54%) find Jewish organizations to be very welcoming. The same is true for newcomers to Orange County.

However, more than one quarter of Jewish adults in interfaith households find Jewish organizations to be unwelcoming, as do a similar share of Jewish adults in households with someone who is

LGBTQ+. More than one third of Jewish adults who are in households with a person of color find Jewish organizations to be unwelcoming.

Table 7.9. How welcoming are Jewish organizations to...

Of Jewish adults in each of these subgroups	Not at all welcoming (%)	Not too welcoming (%)	Somewhat welcoming (%)	Very welcoming (%)	No opinion (%)	Total (%)
Adults in household with someone with disability or special need	<1	7	17	54	22	100
Newcomers to Orange County	<1	3	15	55	26	100
Adults in household with person of color	14	21	27	30	7	100
Adults in household with LGBTQ+	8	20	31	27	13	100
Adults in interfaith household	7	21	16	15	41	100

Ratings of Jewish organizations and Jewish engagement

Tables 7.10, 7.11, and 7.12 break down three of the rating categories further. Two of the questions concerned responses to political issues (Israel-Hamas war and antisemitism), and the third asked about the organization meeting community members' needs. Generally, Jewish adults who are more Jewishly involved are more likely to have an opinion, and to rate Jewish organizations positively, compared to those who are less Jewishly engaged. The majority of Jewish adults who are less Jewishly engaged have no opinion about Jewish organizations. They are most likely not sufficiently aware of the actions of organizations to make an informed opinion. It is noteworthy that Jewish adults in the Communal and Spiritual groups also have the highest negative ratings for organizations, reflecting their level of awareness of organization actions that they disagree with.

Table 7.10. Rating Jewish organizations' response to the Israel-Hamas war

	Very negative (%)	Somewhat negative (%)	Somewhat positive (%)	Very positive (%)	Don't know (%)	Total (%)
All Jewish adults	3	9	18	17	52	100
Jewish engagement						
Occasional	1	7	8	15	69	100
Personal	3	5	9	4	80	100
Holiday	3	5	22	18	52	100
Spiritual	<1	4	54	32	10	100
Communal	12	18	21	29	21	100

Table 7.11. Rating Jewish organizations' response to antisemitism in the United States

	Very negative (%)	Somewhat negative (%)	Somewhat positive (%)	Very positive (%)	Don't know (%)	Total (%)
All Jewish adults	4	14	20	17	45	100
Jewish engagement						
Occasional	4	4	7	14	70	100
Personal	2	28	4	9	57	100
Holiday	2	8	25	22	43	100
Spiritual	1	22	42	27	9	100
Communal	11	16	39	18	16	100

Table 7.12. Rating Jewish organizations meeting the needs of community members

	Very negative (%)	Somewhat negative (%)	Somewhat positive (%)	Very positive (%)	Don't know (%)	Total (%)
All Jewish adults	2	9	30	10	50	100
Jewish engagement						
Occasional	2	5	3	15	75	100
Personal	4	9	27	<1	60	100
Holiday	2	7	34	6	51	100
Spiritual	1	19	64	6	9	100
Communal	1	9	43	22	25	100

CHAPTER 8. CONNECTION TO ISRAEL

Emotional attachment to Israel

Seventy-three percent of Jewish adults in Orange County consider themselves somewhat attached (34%) or very attached to Israel (39%) (Table 8.1).

Table 8.1. Emotional attachment to Israel

	Not at all attached (%)	Not too attached (%)	Somewhat attached (%)	Very attached (%)	Total (%)
OC Jewish adults	11	16	34	39	100
US Jewish adults (CDS)	15	20	32	33	100
US Jewish adults (Pew 2020)	14	27	32	25	100

Travel to Israel and Israel-related activities

Fifty-five percent of Jewish adults have either traveled to or lived in Israel (Table 8.2). This is higher than among all Jewish adults, of whom 46% have been to Israel at least once.

Table 8.2. Travel to Israel

	Never (%)	Once (%)	More than once (%)	Lived in Israel (%)	Total (%)
OC Jewish adults	45	22	20	13	100
US Jewish adults (Pew 2020)	54	19	21	5	100

Three-quarters of OC Jewish adults feel emotionally attached to Israel, including 34% who are somewhat attached and 39% who are very attached. Not surprisingly, those who have traveled to Israel multiple times or lived in Israel are more emotionally connected to Israel than those who have not traveled to Israel or have only visited once. Among Jewish adults who have never been to Israel, 12% are very attached, compared to 90% of those who have lived in Israel (Table 8.3).

Table 8.3. Emotional attachment to Israel by travel

	Not at all attached (%)	Not too attached (%)	Somewhat attached (%)	Very attached (%)	Total (%)
All Jewish adults	11	16	34	39	100
Israel travel					
Never	23	28	36	12	100
Once	2	10	59	29	100
More than once	1	5	19	75	100
Lived in Israel	<1	0	9	90	100

Thirteen percent of Jewish adults traveled to Israel on an educational program or volunteer trip that was less than six months in duration, while 6% traveled on this type of program for a longer time (Table 8.4). Ten percent of Jewish adults traveled on a mission or tour sponsored by a federation, synagogue, or another Jewish organization other than Birthright Israel. For those under age 53, 41% traveled to Israel on a Birthright Israel trip.

Five percent of school-aged children over the age of 12 had participated in a program in Israel or planned to participate in such a program in the coming year. The term “school-aged children” includes those ages 18 and 19 who are still in high school.

Table 8.4. Types of trips to Israel

	All Jewish adults (%)
Birthright Israel (<53)	41
Educational trip less than six months	13
Educational trip greater than six months	6
Sponsored by Jewish organization	10

Over the past year, 43% of Jewish adults reported following news about Israel very closely, and another 43% followed news about Israel somewhat closely (Table 8.5). Among those who are very attached to Israel, 68% followed the news about Israel very closely, and 28% followed the news about Israel somewhat closely. However, even among those who are not at all or not too attached to Israel, 16% followed the news about Israel very closely, and 46% followed the news about Israel somewhat closely.

Table 8.5. News about Israel by attachment

	Not at all closely (%)	Not too closely (%)	Somewhat closely (%)	Very closely (%)	Total (%)
All Jewish adults	1	13	43	43	100
Israel attachment					
Not at all/too attached	1	37	46	16	100
Somewhat attached	2	5	56	37	100
Very attached	<1	3	28	68	100

In the past year, 12% of Jewish adults participated in programs or activities sponsored by Israel-related organizations. Twenty-eight percent of Jewish households made a charitable contribution to an Israel-related organization in the past year. When asked about which causes were most important for them to volunteer for or donate to, 40% of Jewish adults listed Israel, making it the third highest cause.

Israeli Americans

The Israeli American Jewish community is typically defined as consisting of those who are immigrants from Israel, Israeli citizens, children or grandchildren of Israelis, or individuals who live in a Hebrew-speaking household. Five percent of Jewish adults in Orange County were born in Israel, while 15% of Jewish adults consider themselves to be part of the Israeli American Jewish community. Thirteen percent of Jewish adults lived in Israel at some point during their lives.

Impact of October 7, 2023, and the Israel-Hamas war

October 7, 2023, and the subsequent war between Israel and Hamas have influenced the emotional attachment to Israel for most Jewish adults in Orange County. For two thirds of Jewish adults, these events have somewhat increased (34%) or very much increased (32%) their emotional attachment to Israel, but for 10% their emotional attachment has decreased (Table 8.6). One quarter of Jewish adults experienced no change in emotional attachment to Israel since the war.

October 7 and its aftermath seems to have driven an even wider gap in Israel attitudes. For those who are currently very attached, about half said that their attachment had increased since October 7. Among those who are not at all attached, 23% said their attachment had decreased, and 28% said their attachment had increased.

Table 8.6. Change in Israel attachment since October 7

	Much or somewhat less than before (%)	Somewhat more than before (%)	Much more than before (%)	No change (%)	Total (%)
All Jewish adults	10	34	32	25	100
Israel attachment					
Not at all/too attached	23	38	7	32	100
Somewhat attached	8	55	31	7	100
Very attached	1	14	50	35	100

When asked to rate Orange County Jewish organizations' response to the Israel-Hamas war, more than half of Jewish adults (52%) did not know how to rate the organizations. This finding indicates they are not sufficiently aware of the activities of these organizations. Of those that provided a rating, most rated the organizations either somewhat or very positively (Table 8.7).

Table 8.7. Ratings of Orange County Jewish organizations' response to the Israel-Hamas war

	All Jewish adults (%)
Very positive	17
Somewhat positive	18
Somewhat negative	9
Very negative	3
Don't know	52

In their words:

I believe community organizations emphasize support of Israel ahead of the need to develop and support local Jewish organization and institutions.

The community should be an outspoken advocate for the Jewish community and Israel.

Stand up for the right of Israel to exist and for us to exist as Jews who support Israel as the homeland of the Jewish people.

Almost all Jewish adults (92%) in Orange County had engaged in some Israel-related activity since October 7, 2023 (Table 8.8). The most common Israel-related activity was engaging in conversations with friends/family about the war (92%), followed by making a special donation of money or goods in aid of Israel (41%). There were minimal activities in support of Palestinians, such as making a special donation in aid to Palestinians (8%) or attending a rally or event expressing support for Palestinians (4%).

Table 8.8. Israel-related activities since October 7

	All Jewish adults (%)
Any	92
Engaged in conversations with friends/family about the Israel-Hamas war	90
Made a special donation of money or goods in aid to Israel	41
Posted on social media about the Israel-Hamas war	33
Attended a rally/event expressing support/solidarity with Israel	27
Made a special donation of money or goods in aid to Palestinians	8
Attended a rally/event expressing support/solidarity with Palestinians	4
Other	2

Attitudes about Israel

Although attitudes are not universal, there is broad consensus in the OC Jewish community about certain views of Israel (Table 8.9). About nine-in-ten Jews somewhat or strongly agree that:

- It is important for Israel to exist as a refuge for the Jewish people, now and in the future
- Israel is under constant threat from hostile neighbors who seek its destruction
- The Jewish people have a fundamental right to their historic homeland in Israel

The community is more divided with respect to agreement with these statements:

- I think that Israel regularly violates the human rights of the Palestinian people
- I almost always agree with Israel's policies and actions

Table 8.9. Views about Israel

	Strongly disagree (%)	Somewhat disagree (%)	Somewhat agree (%)	Strongly agree (%)	No opinion/ not sure (%)	Total (%)
All Jewish adults						
I consider it important for Israel to exist as a refuge for the Jewish people, now and in the future	5	1	9	82	3	100
I think that Israel is under constant threat from hostile neighbors who seek its destruction	7	3	11	75	5	100
I believe that that the Jewish people have a fundamental right to their historic homeland in Israel	9	2	12	71	4	100
I consider it important for Israel to be a place where Jewish values and traditions make up the mainstream culture	7	6	24	57	6	100
I think that Israel regularly violates the human rights of the Palestinian people	33	23	14	19	10	100
I almost always agree with Israel's policies and actions	17	28	34	15	7	100
I believe that there will eventually be lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians	17	39	25	5	14	100

Discourse around Israel

Orange County Jews generally feel confident in their level of knowledge about the situation in Israel, and lack of knowledge is rarely a barrier to participation in conversations about Israel. However, not everyone feels comfortable sharing their views in Jewish and non-Jewish settings. Seventeen percent of Jewish adults strongly agree and 43% somewhat agree that they often feel their views about Israel are unwelcome in non-Jewish settings. With respect to Jewish settings, 12% strongly agree and 15% somewhat agree that they often feel their views about Israel are unwelcome (Table 8.10).

Table 8.10. Discourse about Israel

	Strongly disagree (%)	Somewhat disagree (%)	Somewhat agree (%)	Strongly agree (%)	No opinion/not sure (%)	Total (%)
All Jewish adults						
I feel confident that I understand the current situation in Israel	2	12	44	36	4	100
I often feel I don't know enough to participate in conversations about Israel	25	30	33	6	6	100
I often feel my views about Israel are unwelcome in non-Jewish settings	8	16	43	17	16	100
I often feel my views about Israel are unwelcome in Jewish settings	26	26	15	12	22	100

Connection between Israel and antisemitism

The majority of OC Jewish adults report that they often see or hear criticism of Israel that they consider to be inaccurate or unfair (29% somewhat agree; 51% strongly agree). The majority also somewhat (37%) or strongly (42%) agree that they often see or hear criticism of Israel that they consider to be antisemitic. See Chapter 9 for more about the connection between Israel and antisemitism. Table 8.11)

Table 8.11. Discourse around Israel

	Strongly disagree (%)	Somewhat disagree (%)	Somewhat agree (%)	Strongly agree (%)	No opinion/not sure (%)	Total (%)
All Jewish adults						
I often see or hear criticism of Israel that I consider to be inaccurate or unfair	6	6	29	51	8	100
I often see or hear criticism of Israel that I consider to be antisemitic	3	11	37	42	7	100

Israel and Jewish engagement

As we would expect, attachment to Israel is strongly correlated with overall Jewish engagement. Of those in the Occasional engagement group, just over half are not attached to Israel, and only 12% are very attached. The highest level of strong attachment is found in the Spiritual group (75% are very attached). In the Holiday and Communal groups, almost half are very attached to Israel (Table 8.12).

Table 8.12. Emotional attachment to Israel by Jewish engagement

	Not at all attached (%)	Not too attached (%)	Somewhat attached (%)	Very attached (%)	Total (%)
All Jewish adults	11	16	34	39	100
Jewish engagement					
Occasional	25	28	34	12	100
Personal	2	15	51	32	100
Holiday	7	13	33	47	100
Spiritual	0	14	10	75	100
Communal	16	3	37	44	100

Travel to Israel is also correlated with overall Jewish engagement. Among the Occasional group, 81% have never been to Israel. The Spiritual group, with the highest level of attachment to Israel, has the highest share (35%) who have lived in Israel (Table 8.13).

Table 8.13. Travel to Israel by Jewish engagement

	Never (%)	Once (%)	More than once (%)	Lived in Israel (%)	Total (%)
All Jewish adults	45	22	20	13	100
Jewish engagement					
Occasional	81	14	4	1	100
Personal	35	36	19	11	100
Holiday	34	29	27	10	100
Spiritual	23	7	35	35	100
Communal	32	25	25	18	100

Generational divides around Israel

On most issues relating to Israel, including emotional attachment to Israel and change in Israel attachment post October 7, there are no significant differences between age groups in Orange County (Tables 8.14a, 8.14b). However, in certain activities and attitudes, there is evidence of generational divides. Specifically, the youngest cohort (22-44) was more likely to have posted on social media about the Israel-Hamas war, made a special donation of money or goods in aid to Palestinians, or attended a rally/event expressing solidarity or support with Palestinians (Table 8.14a). While there are no significant differences on most views of Israel by age, the youngest (22-44) and oldest (75+) were most likely to strongly agree with the statement that Israel regularly violates the human rights of the Palestinian people (Table 8.14b). The youngest two cohorts (22-54) were least likely to strongly agree with the statement that they almost always agree with Israel's policies and actions.

Table 8.14a. Selected Israel-related activities since October 7 by age

	Posted on social media about the Israel-Hamas war (%)	Made a special donation of money or goods in aid to Palestinians (%)	Attended a rally/event expressing support/solidarity with Palestinians (%)
All Jewish adults	33	8	4
Age			
22-44	53	14	10
45-54	28	2	1
55-64	26	2	1
65-74	28	5	5
75+	4	2	<1

Table 8.14b. Selected views about Israel, strongly agree, by age

	I think that Israel regularly violates the human rights of the Palestinian people (%)	I almost always agree with Israel's policies and actions (%)
All Jewish adults	19	15
Age		
22-44	28	5
45-54	5	5
55-64	8	37
65-74	13	22
75+	23	14

There are significant age differences in the rating of Jewish organizations' responses to the Israel-Hamas war by age (Table 8.15). Jewish adults ages 45 to 54 had the smallest share who answered "don't know" about the Jewish organization responses (26%) and included the largest share with a very positive rating of the organizations' response (47%).

Table 8.15. Rating Jewish organizations' response to the Israel-Hamas war by age

	Very negative (%)	Somewhat negative (%)	Somewhat positive (%)	Very positive (%)	Don't know (%)	Total (%)
All Jewish adults	3	9	18	17	52	100
Age						
22-44	6	9	23	13	49	100
45-54	1	1	24	47	26	100
55-64	2	17	11	5	65	100
65-74	5	6	17	28	44	100
75+	1	<1	16	11	73	100

Political divides about Israel

Political views are one of the primary drivers of attachment to Israel. In particular, Jews who describe themselves as very liberal are least likely to feel attached to Israel, with 30% not at all attached and 33% not too attached. Politically moderate and conservative Jews have the strongest attachment to Israel. See Chapter 10 for more on political views.

CHAPTER 9. ANTISEMITISM CONCERNS

Antisemitic experiences

Thirty-eight percent of Jewish adults reported that they personally were the target of an antisemitic incident within the past year (Table 9.1).

The most common antisemitic incidents were antisemitic insults or harassment in person (22%) or on social media (20%). Fifteen percent of Jewish adults were targets of social exclusion because of their Jewish identity.

Forty-two percent of Jewish adults strongly agree and another 37% somewhat agree that they often see or hear criticism of Israel that they consider to be antisemitic.

Table 9.1. Any antisemitic incidents, past year

	All Jewish adults (%)
Any incident	38
Antisemitic insult or harassment in person	22
Antisemitic insult or harassment on social media	20
Social exclusion because of your Jewish identity	15
Antisemitic physical attack or threat of attack	2
Antisemitic act of vandalism	3
Harassment in public place	1
Other	2

Nationally over the past 10 years, 16% of Jewish adults experienced an antisemitic incident. In other southern CA communities, with community studies conducted prior to October 7, 17% experienced an antisemitic incident. For communities with post-October 7 studies, 30% of Jewish adults experienced an antisemitic incident (CDS).¹³

Of the Orange County adults who experienced an antisemitic incident, almost one third (31%) reported the incident (Table 9.2).

¹³ Note that the wording of this question varied across communities and may not be directly comparable. California studies include San Diego (2022), Los Angeles (2021), and Long Beach (2021). Post-October 7 studies include Miami (2024), Maine (2024), Northeast Florida (2024), and St. Louis (2024).

Table 9.2. Reported antisemitic incidents

	Jewish adults who experienced antisemitic incident (%)
Any report	31
Officials (HR, administrator, social media moderator)	13
Rabbi or other Jewish professional	9
Government agency (e.g., law enforcement)	9
Jewish community organization (e.g., ADL)	6
Friends and family	5
Someone else	1

The most common reason for not reporting an incident was the belief that the report would not result in any action (53%) (Table 9.3). Other notable reasons for not reporting an incident included not knowing who to report it to (39%) and not considering the incident to be serious (37%). Very few (2%) avoided reporting out of fear of consequences.

Table 9.3. Reasons for not reporting antisemitic incident

	Jewish adults who experienced antisemitic incident but did not report (%)
Did not think that any change would happen as a result of reporting	53
Did not know who to report to	39
Did not consider the incident to be serious	37
Not necessary to report (reported by others, public knowledge, not reportable, handled in another way)	11
Avoid consequences (fear, work, family)	2
Something else	4

Antisemitism and Israel

A little over one quarter of OC Jewish adults (27%) experienced an antisemitic incident that they considered to be related to criticism of Israel (Table 9.4). Of these Israel-related incidents, most were in the form of insults or harassment, either on social media (15%) or in person (13%).

Table 9.4. Antisemitic incidents related to criticism of Israel, past year

	All Jewish adults (%)
Any incident	27
Antisemitic insult or harassment on social media	15
Antisemitic insult or harassment in person	13
Social exclusion because of your Jewish identity	6
Antisemitic physical attack or threat of attack	2
Antisemitic act of vandalism	2
Other	<1

The majority of OC Jewish adults often see or hear criticism of Israel that they consider to be antisemitic (Table 9.5). In all, 42% strongly agree and 37% somewhat agree that they have heard criticism of Israel that they consider to be antisemitic (see Chapter 8).

Table 9.5. Statements about Israel

	Strongly disagree (%)	Somewhat disagree (%)	Somewhat agree (%)	Strongly agree (%)	No opinion/not sure (%)	Total (%)
All Jewish adults						
I often see or hear criticism of Israel that I consider to be antisemitic	3	11	37	42	7	100

In their words:

Fight antisemitism without conflating criticism of Israel with antisemitism! I am opposed to the stifling of dissent on college campuses. What ever happened to two Jews, three opinions?

Getting away from right-wing talking points about antisemitism and instead focus on the growing antisemitism of the American right.

Stand up against the antisemitism spreading after October 7—keep it safe for us to be Jewish.

Concerns about antisemitism

The vast majority of Orange County Jewish adults are either very or extremely concerned about antisemitism on college campuses, in the United States, and around the world (Table 9.6).

Table 9.6. Concerns about antisemitism

	Not at all concerned (%)	Not too concerned (%)	Somewhat concerned (%)	Very concerned (%)	Extremely concerned (%)	Total (%)
All Jewish adults						
Around the world	<1	1	16	26	56	100
In the United States	1	1	17	37	44	100
On US college campuses	7	2	12	21	58	100
Among state and local government officials/candidates	3	10	33	20	33	100
In K-12 public schools	5	9	34	23	29	100
In Orange County, aside from college campuses	3	15	33	19	31	100

Thirty-seven percent of Jewish adults selected antisemitism as one of their top five most important issues in local elections. Thirty-six percent of Jewish adults selected antisemitism as one of their top five most important issues in national elections (see Chapter 10).

In their words:

[A priority is...] fighting antisemitism, especially on local campuses. Support Hillel and Chabad in the work they do there and think beyond them to consider other resources we can provide to the students (i.e., mental health services and a safety service to escort them on campus).

Impact on Jewish life

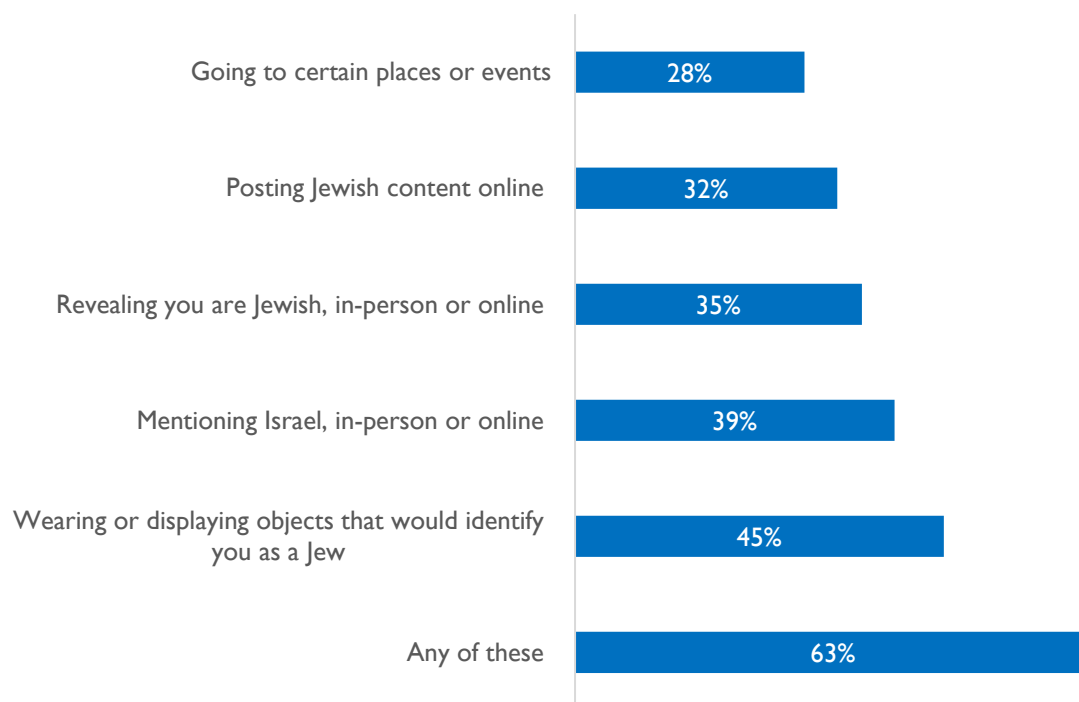
Almost two thirds of Jewish adults (63%) avoided activities out of a fear of antisemitism (Figure 9.1). For example, 45% avoided wearing clothing or objects that identified them as Jewish, and 28% avoided going to certain places or events out of concern for antisemitism. Nonetheless, only 15% of Jewish adults said that safety and security was a barrier to their participation in Jewish events (see Chapter 6).

In their words:

I also have not found a good solution to the safety issue. I don't feel safe being Jewish in the world today. I am afraid for my kids, and I am not even sure where to send them to college given the state of things. I don't feel safe even though the temples hire security.

Figure 9.1. Avoided out of a fear of antisemitism, past year

All Jewish adults



Four-in-ten Jewish adults listed combating antisemitism as a top cause for volunteering and donations (see Chapter 7).

Just over one third of OC Jewish adults rated Jewish organizations' response to antisemitism as somewhat (20%) or very (17%) positive. Almost half of Jewish adults (45%) did not know enough to provide a rating, and 18% rated the organizational response as negative (see Chapter 7).

In their words:

I think that it is the responsibility of the Jewish Federation to have more of a vocal voice in the antisemitism that is happening here in OC, and particularly in Irvine with the City of Irvine council members and mayor.

For democracy to prevail in this country I think the Jewish community needs to reach out to educate the non-Jewish community by exposing them to Jewish history and ethical values.

Antisemitism and age

Despite being less concerned about antisemitism in Orange County, younger Jewish adults—ages 22 to 44 and ages 45 to 54—are more likely to alter their behavior due to fear of antisemitism than are older Jewish adults (Table 9.7). This pattern is evident in most types of behavior, but particularly in terms of identifying publicly as being Jewish by wearing or displaying Jewish objects, mentioning Israel in conversation, or otherwise revealing that they are Jewish to others.

Table 9.7. Avoided out of a fear of antisemitism by age

	Any of these (%)	Wearing or displaying Jewish symbols (%)	Mentioning Israel, in-person or online (%)	Revealing you are Jewish, in-person or online (%)	Posting Jewish content online (%)	Going to certain places or events (%)
All Jewish adults	63	45	39	35	32	28
Age						
22-44	77	63	61	51	45	35
45-54	70	58	67	62	32	23
55-64	42	24	18	22	18	25
65-74	69	45	29	26	32	16
75+	41	27	11	11	13	23

Younger Jewish adults are less concerned about local antisemitism than are older adults, including antisemitism in K-12 schools and in Orange County in general. It is noteworthy that parents of minor children are less concerned about local antisemitism (29% very/extremely concerned) compared to those without children (53% very/extremely concerned) (Table 9.8).

Table 9.8. Very/extremely concerned about antisemitism

	Around the world (%)	In the United States (%)	On US college campuses (%)	Among state and local government officials/candidates (%)	In K-12 public schools (%)	In Orange County, aside from college campuses (%)
All Jewish adults	82	81	80	54	51	50
Age						
22-44	77	77	76	46	41	29
45-54	86	86	87	45	35	37
55-64	84	81	84	61	69	71
65-74	85	82	75	54	52	63
75+	95	91	90	74	69	69
Minor child in household						
No children	83	81	80	55	53	53
Yes, have children	79	75	75	48	40	29

Antisemitism and political views

Although Jewish adults of all political views have similar levels of concern about many types of antisemitism, Jews who are very liberal are much less concerned about antisemitism around the world (57% very/extremely concerned) and on US college campuses (48% very/extremely concerned) compared to those holding other political views (Table 9.9).

Table 9.9. Very/extremely concerned about antisemitism by political views

	Around the world (%)	In the United States (%)	On US college campuses (%)	Among state and local government officials/candidates (%)	In K-12 public schools (%)	In Orange County, aside from college campuses (%)
All Jewish adults	82	81	80	54	51	50
Political views						
Very liberal	57	72	48	53	38	49
Liberal	84	76	78	43	45	42
Moderate	86	83	86	63	63	50
Conservative/Very conservative	96	90	96	54	52	57

CHAPTER 10. POLITICAL VIEWS

Political views and party affiliation

In the current political climate, political views and party affiliation are sometimes associated with conflict or polarization within the Jewish community. Politics are particularly of interest to many in Orange County, which is known to be “one of America’s few ‘purple’ counties.”¹⁴

Half of OC Jewish adults describe themselves as Democrats, a significantly larger share than among the general OC adult population (38%) but a smaller share than among all US Jewish adults in 2020 (57%) (Table 10.1). The share of OC Jews who are Republican (21%) is slightly smaller than among all OC adults (24%) and larger than among all US Jews (20%). The share who are independent (26%) is similar to all OC adults (27%) but smaller than among all US Jews (20%).

Political views are correlated with but not identical to party affiliation. In comparison to US Jewish adults, OC Jewish adults lean more conservative (Table 10.2). In OC, 21% of Jewish adults are politically conservative and 4% very conservative; among all US Jews, 12% are conservative and 3% very conservative.

Among OC Jewish adults, 16% are very liberal, very similar to the 18% among the US Jewish community¹⁵. As we will see below, there are significant differences in many attitudes across the political spectrum. The distinction between those who are *very* liberal and those who are liberal is noteworthy.

As we would expect, the vast majority of Republicans (77%) are conservative or very conservative; the majority of Democrats are very liberal (26%) or liberal (49%) (Table 10.3). Independents span all political views; just under half (47%) describe themselves as moderate, one quarter as conservative (26%), and one quarter (27%) as liberal or very liberal.

Because political views are more informative than party affiliation, due to the range of views among Independents, we use political views as our primary analysis lens in the remainder of this chapter.

¹⁴ <https://issuu.com/ucisocialecology/docs/redcountybluecountyorangecounty>

¹⁵ No comparison data is available for OC county.

Table 10.1. Party affiliation

	OC Jewish adults (%)	All OC adults (UCI-OC Poll 2025 ¹⁶) (%)	US Jewish adults (Pew 2020) (%)
Democrat	50	38	57
Republican	21	24	16
Independent	26	27	20
Other	2	6	7
None (“Don’t know” for UCI; No answer for Pew)	1	5	2
Total	100	100	100

Table 10.2. Political views

	OC Jewish adults (%)	US Jewish adults, (Pew 2020) (%)
Very liberal	16	18
Liberal	29	32
Moderate	30	32
Conservative	21	12
Very conservative	4	3
Total	100	100

Table 10.3. Party affiliation by political views

	Very liberal (%)	Liberal (%)	Moderate (%)	Conservative/ Very conservative (%)	Total (%)
Republican	0	<1	23	77	100
Democrat	26	49	23	2	100
Independent/Other/None	13	14	47	26	100

Drivers of political views

One of the strongest indicators of political views is age (Table 10.4). Note that the distribution is “curved.” That is, the age group with the largest share of very liberal is 22-44 (23%) followed by 65+ (14% of 65-74, 15% of 75+). The largest share of conservative and very conservative is the middle age range, including 43% of those 45-54 and 41% of those 55-64.

This pattern is similar for party affiliation (Table 10.5). Jewish adults ages under 45 and 65+ include the highest share of Democrats, and Jewish adults ages 55-64 include the highest share of Republicans. It is noteworthy that among the 45-54 age group, 41% are conservative or very conservative, but only 12% are Republicans; over half (52%) of that age group are Independents.

Financial situation is also a driver of political views, but not of party affiliation. Among those who are financially struggling and those who are well off, about one quarter are very liberal. Among those who have extra money, 42% are conservative or very conservative.

¹⁶ UC Irvine School of Social Ecology, “UCI-OC Poll: California’s Next Election: Insights and Analysis” (2025). <https://bpb-us-e2.wpmucdn.com/sites.uci.edu/dist/5/5275/files/2025/07/7-2-2025-UCI-OC-Poll-4.pdf>

Table 10.4. Political views by age

	Very liberal (%)	Liberal (%)	Moderate (%)	Conservative/ Very conservative (%)	Total (%)
All Jewish adults	16	29	30	25	100
Age					
22-44	23	37	32	8	100
45-54	5	21	31	43	100
55-64	8	16	36	41	100
65-74	14	28	26	32	100
75+	15	37	26	22	100
Financial situation					
Struggling	25	42	21	13	100
Enough	15	14	46	25	100
Extra	6	34	18	42	100
Well off	23	21	32	23	100

Table 10.5. Party affiliation by age and financial situation

	Democrat (%)	Republican (%)	Independent/Other/None (%)	Total (%)
All Jewish adults	50	21	28	100
Age				
22-44	54	11	35	100
45-54	36	12	52	100
55-64	36	40	24	100
65-74	55	29	16	100
75+	62	20	18	100
Financial situation				
Struggling	60	6	34	100
Enough	45	31	24	100
Extra	44	25	31	100
Well off	59	21	20	100

Top election issues

The study asked individuals to identify up to five of their most important issues in the voting booth for local and national elections (Figures 10.1 and 10.2). The economy is the leading priority for OC Jewish adults both in local elections and in national elections. Israel was identified as a top local issue by 37% of OC Jewish adults and a top national issue by 41% of OC Jewish adults. A similar share of OC Jewish adults selected antisemitism as a top issue for local elections (37%) and national elections (36%).

The wording of these issues was intentionally presented as neutral. For example, for issues like “economy” or “immigration,” a group of respondents might give the same priority to those issue areas but differ in their policy preferences with respect to those issues.

Figure 10.1. Most frequently cited top local issues

Jewish specific issues shown in blue

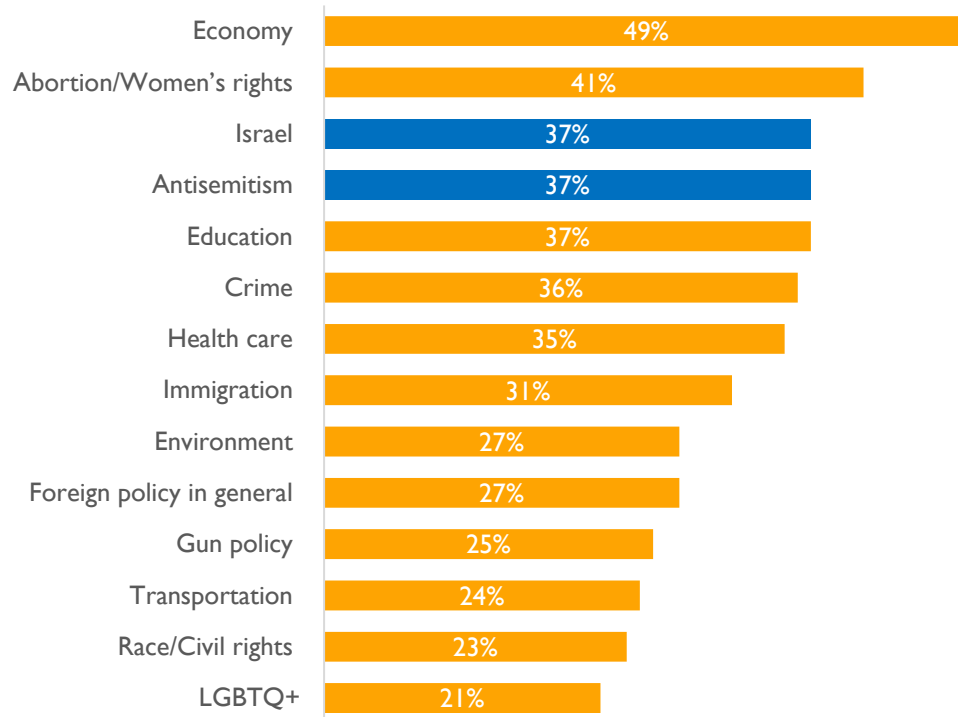
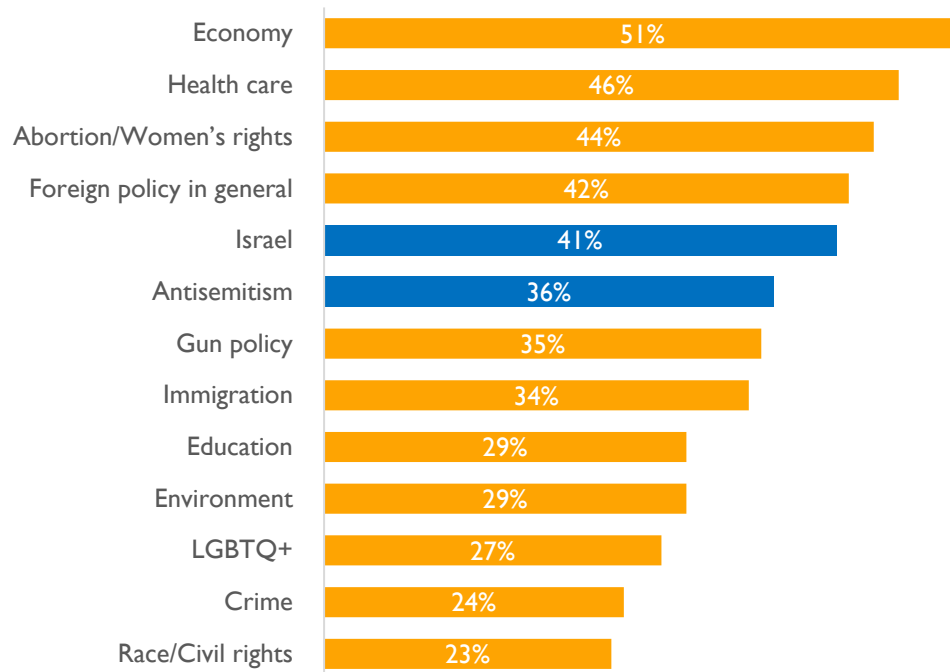


Figure 10.2. Most frequently cited top national issues

Jewish specific issues shown in blue



As expected, priority issues varied for those holding different political views (tables 10.6, 10.7).

For local elections, only the politically moderate have Jewish-related issues (antisemitism and Israel) among their most frequently selected local concerns. Very liberal Jewish adults are most frequently concerned about social and civil rights issues, while liberals are also concerned about “bread and butter” issues, including the economy and health care. For conservatives, the leading local issues are the economy, crime, and immigration.

Although the most frequently identified issues by political party are listed here, it is important to keep in mind the wide range of views among those who identify politically as Independents, something else, or none.

Table 10.6. Most frequently cited top issues by political views and party affiliation, local elections

Political views	Most cited issue	% of Jewish adults	Second most cited issue	% of Jewish adults	Third most cited issue	% of Jewish adults
Very liberal	Abortion/Women's rights	77	LGBTQ+	72	Race/Civil rights	62
Liberal	Abortion/Women's rights	60	Economy	44	Health care	43
Moderate	Economy	53	Antisemitism	48	Israel	47
Conservative/Very conservative	Economy	77	Crime	76	Immigration	67
Party affiliation						
Republican	Economy	70	Crime	68	Israel	65
Democrat	Abortion/Women's rights	56	Health care	48	Economy	38
Independent/Other/None	Economy	52	Crime	47	Israel	42

Note: Ranked by the % of OC Jewish adults in each category who included the issue in their top five.

The most frequently identified top issues in national elections are shown in Table 10.7. For national elections, Israel is a widely shared priority among moderates and conservatives, and among Republicans and Independents. No group has antisemitism as a leading national issue.

Table 10.7. Most frequently cited top issues by political views and party affiliation, national elections

Political views	Most cited issue	% of Jewish adults	Second most cited issue	% of Jewish adults	Third most cited issue	% of Jewish adults
Very liberal	LGBTQ+	73	Abortion/Women's rights	69	Race/Civil rights	61
Liberal	Abortion/Women's rights	66	Health care	61	Gun policy	49
Moderate	Economy	51	Foreign policy in general	49	Israel	49
Conservative/Very conservative	Economy	83	Israel	78	Immigration	74
Party affiliation						
Republican	Economy	79	Immigration	74	Israel	71
Democrat	Abortion/Women's rights	64	Health care	56	Gun policy	44
Independent/Other/None	Foreign policy in general	54	Economy	52	Israel	49

Note: Ranked by the % of OC Jewish adults in each category who included the issue in their top five.

Jewish engagement and political views

There are no significant differences in political views for OC Jewish adults by Jewish engagement group (Table 10.8). In other words, Jewish behaviors do not differ significantly by the individual's political views.

Table 10.8. Political views by Jewish engagement

	Very liberal (%)	Liberal (%)	Moderate (%)	Conservative/ Very conservative (%)	Total (%)
All Jewish adults	16	29	30	25	100
Jewish engagement					
Occasional	19	34	25	22	100
Personal	14	38	27	21	100
Holiday	12	19	37	32	100
Spiritual	20	17	36	28	100
Communal	19	33	26	22	100

However, political views are highly correlated with attitudes about the meaning and importance of being Jewish. Although there is agreement about the importance of many aspects of being Jewish across political views, there are other areas with significant differences. For example, a similar share of all OC Jewish adults consider the following aspects of being Jewish to be essential: “leading an ethical and moral life” (83%), “Connecting to family and traditions” (73%) and “Learning and teaching about the Holocaust” (68%) (Table 10.9). However, agreement that caring about Israel as an essential aspect of being Jewish appears for the majority of all political views, except for those who are very liberal: Of very liberal Jews, 27% consider caring about Israel to be essential to being Jewish compared to 95% among conservative/very conservative Jews. Working for justice and equality in society is considered essential to being Jewish for 94% of very liberal Jews, 64% of liberal Jews, 50% of moderates, and 25% of conservatives.

Table 10.9. Essential to being Jewish by political views

Items that differ significantly by political views

	Caring about Israel (%)	Taking care of people in need (%)	Working for justice and equality in society (%)	Jewish learning and education (%)	Being part of a Jewish community (%)	Praying or spiritual connection (%)
All Jewish adults	72	68	54	52	43	34
Political views						
Very liberal	27	91	94	54	39	22
Liberal	70	69	64	36	35	20
Moderate	83	67	50	52	51	44
Conservative/Very conservative	95	57	25	70	47	47

Given the differences in orientation toward social justice and caring for people in need, it is not surprising that there are differences in patterns of charitable donation by political views. Although

the overall rate of donating is similar for all political views, 38% of very liberal and 31% of liberal Jewish households donate only to non-Jewish organizations (Table 10.10).

Table 10.10. Charitable donations by political views (past year)

	Both Jewish and non- Jewish organizations (%)	Jewish organizations only (%)	Non-Jewish organizations only (%)	None/ Don't know (%)	Total (%)
All Jewish households	50	9	24	18	100
Political views					
Very liberal	46	<1	38	16	100
Liberal	37	11	31	22	100
Moderate	53	9	18	20	100
Conservative/ Very conservative	65	13	13	9	100

Concern about antisemitism

Concern about antisemitism around the world and on US college campuses is far higher among those with more conservative political views (Table 10.11). These concerns are nearly universal among moderate and conservative Jewish adults. Among very liberal Jewish adults, closer to half are very concerned about antisemitism around the world (57%) and on US college campuses (48%).

Table 10.11. Concern about antisemitism by political views
% very or extremely concerned

	Around the world (%)	In the United States (%)	On US college campuses (%)	Among state and local government officials/ candidates (%)	In K-12 public schools (%)	In Orange County, aside from college campuses (%)
All Jewish adults	82	81	80	54	51	50
Political views						
Very liberal	57	72	48	53	38	49
Liberal	84	76	78	43	45	42
Moderate	86	83	86	63	63	50
Conservative/ Very conservative	96	90	96	54	52	57
Party affiliation						
Democrat	82	78	74	55	54	52
Republican	95	88	95	57	59	64
Independent/ Other/None	77	81	79	50	41	35

Israel

The issue that most divides the Jewish community along political lines is Israel. As shown above in Table 10.9, nearly all Jewish adults who are not very liberal consider Israel to be an essential aspect of being Jewish. Among very liberal Jewish adults, only about one quarter (27%) feel this way.¹⁷

Very liberal Jewish adults are less attached to Israel, with 30% saying they are not at all attached and only 16% feeling very attached (Table 10.12). Among moderate and conservative Jewish adults, half or more are very attached to Israel.

The “gap” in attachment has been exacerbated since the events of October 7, 2023 (Table 10.13). While 36% of very liberal Jewish adults said they became less attached to Israel since October 7, the majority of Jewish adults in the other political categories became more attached to Israel since October 7.

Table 10.12. Emotional attachment to Israel by political views

	Not at all attached (%)	Not too attached (%)	Somewhat attached (%)	Very attached (%)	Total (%)
All Jewish adults	11	16	34	39	100
Political views					
Very liberal	30	33	22	16	100
Liberal	9	21	48	22	100
Moderate	11	11	29	50	100
Conservative/Very conservative	3	4	35	59	100

Table 10.13. Change in Israel attachment, post-October 7

	Much less than before (%)	Somewhat less than before (%)	Somewhat more than before (%)	Much more than before (%)	No change (%)	Total (%)
All Jewish adults	8	2	34	32	25	100
Political views						
Very liberal	36	1	31	3	29	100
Liberal	6	3	49	26	16	100
Moderate	1	2	25	41	31	100
Conservative/Very conservative	<1	0	31	44	25	100

To explore views about Israel among OC Jewish adults, the survey asked the extent to which they agree with a set of statements about Israel. Differences based on political views are apparent (Tables 10.14a, 10.14b). For example, nearly all Jewish adults agree that “I consider it important for Israel to exist as a refuge for the Jewish people, now and in the future.” However, among very liberal Jews, just 38% agree with that statement.

¹⁷ See Chapter 8 for other information about Israel. This section focuses specifically on how connections to Israel differ by political view.

Regarding the statement “I think that Israel regularly violates the human rights of the Palestinian people,” 63% of very liberal Jewish adults agree, along with 26% of liberal Jewish adults, 5% of moderate Jewish adults, and less than 1% of conservative Jewish adults. Few Jewish adults in any political view category have hopes of a lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians.

Table 10.14a. Views about Israel, strongly agree

	I consider it important for Israel to exist as a refuge for the Jewish people, now and in the future (%)	I think that Israel is under constant threat from hostile neighbors who seek its destruction (%)	I believe that the Jewish people have a fundamental right to their historic homeland in Israel (%)	I consider it important for Israel to be a place where Jewish values and traditions make up the mainstream culture (%)
All Jewish adults	82	75	71	57
Political views				
Very liberal	38	42	31	16
Liberal	88	75	63	51
Moderate	89	87	80	70
Conservative/Very conservative	96	83	98	75

Table 10.14b. Views about Israel, strongly agree

	I think that Israel regularly violates the human rights of the Palestinian people (%)	I almost always agree with Israel's policies and actions (%)	I believe that there will eventually be lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians (%)
All Jewish adults	19	15	5
Political views			
Very liberal	63	1	9
Liberal	26	3	8
Moderate	5	12	4
Conservative/Very conservative	<1	38	<1

Views about Israel appear to affect engagement in Jewish life. Among very liberal Jewish adults, 45% say their views about Israel are unwelcome in Jewish settings, compared to 10% of politically conservative Jewish adults (Table 10.15). Liberal and moderate Jewish adults have the smallest shares who feel their views about Israel are unwelcome in Jewish settings.

Feeling hampered by a lack of Israel knowledge does not differ by political views. There is no significant difference among those with different political views in the share who feel that they do not know enough to participate in conversations about Israel.

Table 10.15. Statements about Israel, strongly agree

	I often feel my views about Israel are unwelcome in non-Jewish settings (%)	I often feel my views about Israel are unwelcome in Jewish settings (%)	I often feel I don't know enough to participate in conversations about Israel (%)
All Jewish adults	17	12	6
Political views			
Very liberal	11	45	11
Liberal	29	6	8
Moderate	12	2	5
Conservative/Very conservative	15	10	2

Response to October 7

As indicated above (Table 10.13), the events of October 7 and the ensuing Israel-Hamas war have widened the gap in attachment to Israel by political view. This response is illustrated by looking at different responses to the war by political views (Table 10.16a). While 66% of politically conservative Jewish adults donated to Israel, compared to 14% of very liberal Jewish adults, 46% of very liberal Jewish adults donated in support of Palestinians, compared to almost none of the other groups. While Jewish adults of all political views attended rallies or events in support of Israel, 25% of very liberal Jewish adults attended an event in support of Palestinians. Nearly all Jewish adults engaged in conversations with family and friends about the war.

Table 10.16a. Israel-related activities since October 7 by political views

	Any (%)	Engaged in conversations with friends/family about the Israel-Hamas war (%)	Made a special donation of money or goods in aid to Israel (%)	Attended a rally/event expressing support/solidarity with Israel (%)
All Jewish adults	92	90	41	27
Political views				
Very liberal	95	95	14	12
Liberal	88	86	30	34
Moderate	89	86	46	31
Conservative/Very conservative	98	94	66	25

Table 10.16b. Israel-related activities since October 7 by political views

	Posted on social media about the Israel-Hamas war (%)	Made a special donation of money or goods in aid to Palestinians (%)	Attended a rally/event expressing support/solidarity with Palestinians (%)
All Jewish adults	33	8	4
Political views			
Very liberal	48	46	25
Liberal	12	2	<1
Moderate	44	<1	<1
Conservative/Very conservative	36	1	1

As a measure of whether Jewish organizations responded to the Israel-Hamas war in a way that aligns with their own values, the survey asked respondents to rate the overall response of Jewish organizations to the war. About half of all Jewish adults from all political views (including two thirds of liberal Jewish adults) did not know enough to offer an opinion (Table 10.17). About 30% of very liberal Jewish adults rated the response negatively, including 16% very negative and 21% somewhat negative. Moderates and conservative Jewish adults expressed the highest approval of Jewish organizations' responses, with close to 50% rating the response as positive.

Table 10.17. Rating Jewish organizations' response to the Israel-Hamas war

	Very negative (%)	Somewhat negative (%)	Somewhat positive (%)	Very positive (%)	Don't know (%)	Total (%)
All Jewish adults	3	9	18	17	52	100
Political views						
Very liberal	16	21	12	1	49	100
Liberal	<1	8	10	16	65	100
Moderate	1	7	28	20	44	100
Conservative/ Very conservative	1	7	20	27	45	100

CHAPTER 11. ECONOMIC WELL-BEING

Financial situation and household income

To explore the economic well-being of the OC Jewish community, we describe a wide range of household-level financial indicators. No single measure completely captures the nuances of a household's finances. Income level alone, for example, does not account for household size, savings, and financial obligations. Understanding the finances of OC Jewish households through distinct but related measures can help guide organizations and agencies in understanding the contours of OC Jewish households' finances and in targeting their assistance.

In addition to describing income, this chapter details other financial indicators such as employment, debts, and use of public assistance, along with more subjective descriptors such as ability to cover expenses. Our primary measure of financial well-being is what we refer to as the self-described financial situation (see Table 11.1).

Among OC Jewish households, 7% describe their financial situation as unable to make ends meet and another 25% say they are just managing to make ends meet (Table 11.1). We refer to these categories together as financially struggling. In total, 32% of all Jewish households are financially struggling. This share is considerably higher than neighboring communities reported in 2021-22.

Of the quarter of OC Jewish adults who are considering moving away in the next three years, 58% say that the cost of living is the primary reason they are considering moving away. Among those who are planning to leave, 41% are financially struggling. See chapter 2 for more details.

Table 11.1. Self-described financial situation

Report category	Response option	Orange County Jewish households (%)	Long Beach 2021-22 (%)	Los Angeles 2021 (%)	San Diego 2022 (%)
Struggling	Cannot make ends meet	7	1	1	2
	Just managing to make ends meet	25	17	18	13
Enough	Have enough money	30	27	35	35
Extra	Have extra money	18	30	26	26
Well off	Well off	21	25	20	24
Total		100	100	100	100

Sixteen percent of OC Jewish households reported household income of less than \$50,000, including 9% who had an income of less than \$25,000 (Table 11.2). Fourteen percent of OC Jewish households earned \$250,000 or more. Another 23% of OC Jewish households did not know their income or declined to provide that information.

To account for income and household size, The US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) determines the federal poverty level (FPL) annually, using a formula based on household

income and household size.¹⁸ Using that formula, less than 3% of Jewish households have incomes below 100% FPL, and 13% of Jewish households earn below 250% FPL (Table 10.7). FPL does not account for wealth and assets, so it is an imprecise measure of poverty.

Table 11.2. Household income and federal poverty level

All Jewish households (%)	
Income	
Less than \$25,000	9
\$25,000 to \$49,999	7
\$50,000 to \$74,999	7
\$75,000 to \$99,999	6
\$100,000 to \$149,999	20
\$150,000 to \$199,999	9
\$200,000 to \$250,000	6
\$250,000 or more	14
Don't know	1
Prefer not to answer	22
Total	100
Federal Poverty Level	
< 250% of FPL	13
< 100% of FPL	3
100-149% of FPL	7
150-249% of FPL	3

Even when income information is provided, income level does not provide a complete picture of financial well-being because it does not account for household size, savings, and financial obligations. Forty-two percent of financially struggling Jewish households have incomes of less than \$50,000, and about 4% have incomes of \$200,000 or more. About 2% of well-off Jewish households have incomes of under \$100,000 (Table 11.3a).

Choosing not to provide income information should not be interpreted as an indicator of any specific financial situation. Among the 25% of Jewish households who declined to provide income information, their subjective financial situation varied. Six percent (6%) of struggling Jewish households did not provide income information, as well as 30% of Jewish households with enough money, 28% of Jewish households that have extra money, and 29% of well-off Jewish households.

Thirty-seven percent of financially struggling households earn below 250% FPL (Table 11.3b). Over half of financially struggling households (57%) have incomes that place them over 250% of FPL. This finding underscores that FPL is not a complete indicator of financial well-being.

¹⁸ See <https://www.federalregister.gov/d/2023-00885/p-14>

Table 11.3a. Household income and financial situation

	Less than \$50,000 (%)	\$50,000 to \$99,999 (%)	\$100,000 to \$149,999 (%)	\$150,000 to \$199,999 (%)	\$200,000 to \$249,999 (%)	\$250,000 or more (%)	Don't know/ Prefer not to answer (%)	Total (%)
All Jewish households	16	13	20	9	6	14	23	100
Financial situation								
Struggling	42	23	22	3	2	2	6	100
Enough	9	15	20	10	7	9	30	100
Extra	<1	3	30	13	4	22	28	100
Well off	<1	2	12	13	11	32	29	100

Table 11.3b. FPL and financial situation

	<250% FPL (%)	>250% FPL (%)	Income unknown, FPL could not be determined (%)	Total (%)
All Jewish households	13	70	17	100
Financial situation				
Struggling	37	57	6	100
Enough	5	71	24	100
Extra	1	86	13	100
Well off	<1	79	21	100

Employment and educational attainment

Almost two thirds (62%) of OC Jewish adults (those not in high school) are employed, either full time (36%), part-time (16%), or in multiple positions (10%) (Table 11.4). Thirty percent of OC Jewish adults are retired. A similar share (64%) of all US Jewish adults are employed, either full time (47%), part-time (12%), or in multiple positions (5%) (CDS). Twenty-four percent of US Jewish adults are retired.

Table 11.4. Employment status

	All Jewish adults not in high school (%)
	↓
Working	62
Working full-time in one job	36
Working part-time in one job	16
Working in multiple positions	10
Not working	38
Not working for pay but looking for work	5
Not working for pay and not looking for work	1
On temporary leave	2
Retired	30
Total	100

Among OC Jewish adults ages 25 and older, 29% have earned a bachelor's degree as their highest degree, and another 34% have earned a graduate or professional degree (Table 11.5).

Among Jewish adults in the United States, 58% have a bachelor's degree or higher, including 28% with a graduate degree.

Table 11.5. Educational attainment

	All Jewish adults (%)
	↓
Currently enrolled in high school	<1
High school diploma (or equivalent)	14
Associate or technical degree	24
Bachelor's degree	29
Graduate or professional degree	34
Other	<1
Total	100

Debt and retirement planning

About one third of OC Jewish households carry some level of debt, including 21% with credit card debt, 15% who hold student loans, and 6% with medical debt (Table 11.6). Among those who are financially struggling, 45% have credit card debt, and 15% have medical debt.

Table 11.6. Debt burden

	Any of these debts (%)	Credit card debt (%)	Student loan debt (%)	Medical debt (%)
All Jewish households	34	21	15	6
Financial situation				
Struggling	57	45	19	15
Enough	28	19	10	4
Extra	16	1	13	3
Well off	22	4	20	<1

Note: Debt categories were described as followed: Any credit card debt you do not expect to pay in full with your next payment. Student loan debt from your own or someone else's education. Any debt from medical care that you or your family members have received.

Among adults who are not retired, less than half (43%) say that their retirement savings plans are on track (Table 11.7). Among financially struggling households, just 11% say that their retirement plans are on track.

Table 11.7. Retirement savings plan on track

	No (%)	Yes (%)	Don't have a retirement plan (%)	Do not plan to retire (%)	Don't know (%)	Total (%)
All non-retired adults	29	43	14	2	11	100
Financial situation						
Struggling	50	11	28	3	8	100
Enough	26	45	9	4	16	100
Extra	<1	85	2	<1	13	100
Well off	4	95	<1	<1	1	100

Among adults who are currently retired, about half (49%) are very confident that they have enough money for retirement (Table 11.8).

Table 11.8. Confidence in retirement funds

	Not at all confident (%)	Not too confident (%)	Somewhat confident (%)	Very confident (%)	Total (%)
All retired adults	1	7	44	49	100
Financial situation					
Struggling	--	--	--	--	--
Enough	0	4	59	37	100
Extra	--	--	--	--	--
Well off	0	0	2	98	100

Economic insecurity and public benefits

One benchmark that is commonly used to assess financial vulnerability is the ability to cover an emergency expense in full. The metric used by the US Federal Reserve is the ability to cover in full a

\$400 emergency expense with cash, savings, or a credit card. In 2022, 63% of all US households reported that they would be able to cover this expense.¹⁹ In OC Jewish households, 88% feel they are able to cover this expense, and 12% feel they could not afford this expense (Table 11.9). Among OC financially struggling Jewish households, 38% are unable to cover this expense.

One-in-five (20%) OC Jewish households do not have sufficient savings to cover three months of expenses. Among OC financially struggling households, 51% do not have three months of savings.

Table 11.9. Economic insecurity

Could not pay emergency \$400 expense (%)		Insufficient funds to cover 3 months of expenses (%)
All Jewish households	12	20
Financial situation		
Struggling	38	51
Enough	1	12
Extra	0	1
Well off	0	<1

Nearly one-in-five (18%) OC Jewish households could not afford basic necessities like food, housing, or healthcare in the past year (Table 11.10). Among OC financially struggling households, 48% could not afford basic necessities in the past year.

Table 11.10. Could not afford necessities

	Not in past three years (%)	Yes, in past year (%)	Yes, 1 - 3 years ago (%)	Total (%)
All Jewish households	79	18	3	100
Financial situation				
Struggling	46	48	6	100
Enough	94	4	2	100
Extra	>99	0	<1	100
Well off	>99	<1	<1	100

Among all OC Jewish households that are not well off, 17% received at least one public benefit in the year prior to the study (Table 11.11). Benefits included food assistance, health assistance, income support, housing support, and unemployment.

Among OC financially struggling Jewish households, 40% received at least one public benefit (not shown in table).

Among all households that received any public benefit, 46% reported that the assistance they received was not adequate to manage their financial issues (not shown in table).

¹⁹ <https://www.federalreserve.gov/publications/2023-economic-well-being-of-us-households-in-2022-expenses.htm>

Table 11.11. Public benefits

	Jewish households that are not well off (%)
	↓
Any public benefit	17
Food assistance (e.g., community-based food pantry, WIC, CalFresh/SNAP)	9
CalOptima/Medicaid or Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP)	7
CalWORKs, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) benefits	5
Housing support (e.g., rental assistance, housing voucher, affordable housing, reduced rent, home energy or utility assistance (LIHEAP))	3
Unemployment benefits	3

Finances and age

Jewish households with adults in the 45 to 54 age range are most likely to have debt, with nearly half holding credit card debt (Table 11.12). Those Jewish households with younger adults are most likely to carry student loan debt, and those with adults in the 55 to 64 age range are most likely to carry medical debt.

Table 11.12. Debt by age

	Any debt (%)	Credit card debt (%)	Student loan debt (%)	Medical debt (%)
All Jewish households	34	21	15	6
Age				
22-44	44	24	28	5
45-54	55	47	19	3
55-64	43	18	11	21
65-74	15	14	3	1
75+	9	9	1	4

In Jewish households with adults ages 45 to 54, 41% lack sufficient savings to cover three months of expenses (Table 11.13). In this same age group, 35% could not afford necessities including food, housing, or healthcare in the past year, and another 7% could not afford necessities sometime in the previous three years.

Table 11.13. Economic insecurity by age

	Could not pay emergency \$400 expense (%)	Insufficient funds to cover 3 months of expenses (%)	Could not afford necessities, past year (%)	Could not afford necessities, 1-3 years ago (%)
All Jewish households	12	20	18	3
Age				
22-44	21	30	30	2
45-54	7	41	35	7
55-64	5	13	6	1
65-74	6	3	1	3
75+	4	5	2	2

Impact of finances on Jewish life

Nearly one quarter of Jewish adults (23%) said that finances limited their participation in Jewish life (not shown in table). As we would expect, this is highest among the financially struggling; 43% of that group felt finances limited their participation in Jewish life. These limitations include the decision not to enroll children in Jewish education or not joining a synagogue (Table 11.14).

Table 11.14. Financial limitations on participation in Jewish life

	All Jewish adults in eligible households (%)
	↓
Required financial assistance to enroll children in Jewish education, Jewish camp, or activities	4
Did not enroll children in Jewish education, camp, or activities	20
Discontinued synagogue membership or did not join synagogue	10
Required dues relief or financial assistance to maintain synagogue membership	23
Something else	9

Note: Respondents could select multiple limitations.

Financial limitations on Jewish life were highest among those who were most Jewishly engaged. Fifty-one percent of the Spiritual group and 43% of the Communal group indicated financial barriers limited their participation in Jewish life. This finding suggests that Jewish participation, among these groups in particular, might increase were financial barriers reduced. Jewish adults who were less Jewishly engaged had few financial limitations, suggesting there appear to be non-financial reasons for their lack of participation.

Nineteen percent of all Jewish adults said that one of the barriers to participation in programs sponsored by the OC Jewish community was that programs were too expensive. Note that program participation is only one way to participate in Jewish life; the data in table 11.14 included memberships and enrollment.

Respondents were asked to provide additional explanation. The most common reason among the 165 respondents who commented on how cost limits participation is having a fixed or limited income. Many people with limited incomes mentioned having to prioritize what they spend their

money on. The biggest barrier between cost and Jewish participation concerns memberships to temples and the JCC. Many respondents specifically cited the JCC membership dues as too high and noted that they had increased considerably over the years. Multiple people remarked that they cannot attend events, galas, and fundraisers due to the cost.

In their words:

Inflation has been a strain on my budget. JCC membership has gone up 30% over the last three years. I plan on canceling my membership.

Unfortunately, membership and events can be quite expensive. It's a shame, I almost didn't have my son have a bar mitzvah because of the expense.

CHAPTER 12. HEALTH NEEDS AND CARE

Physical and mental health

Most Jewish adults in OC are in good physical and mental health (Table 12.1). Sixty percent of Jewish adults describe their physical health as “very good” (32%) or “excellent” (29%), and 53% describe their mental health as “very good” (24%) or “excellent” (29%). There are, however, 11% who describe their physical health as “only fair” (9%) or “poor” (2%), and 15% who describe their mental health as “only fair” (12%) or “poor” (3%).

Table 12.1. Physical and mental health

	Physical health (%)	Mental health (%)
	↓	↓
Excellent	29	29
Very good	32	24
Good	28	32
Only fair	9	12
Poor	2	3
Total	100	100

There is a clear relationship between health and financial well-being (Table 12.2). Among those who are financially struggling, 39% describe either their physical or mental health as fair or poor.

Table 12.2. Health is fair or poor

	Physical or mental health (%)	Physical health (%)	Mental health (%)
All Jewish adults	22	11	15
Financial situation			
Struggling	39	18	25
Enough	14	9	7
Extra	17	5	16
Well off	13	9	12

Among all OC Jewish households, more than one third (36%) includes someone with a chronic health issue, disability, or other need that affects participation in work, school, or activities (e.g., a cognitive or developmental impairment, chronic disease, physical disability, mental health issue) (Table 12.3). The majority of those with these health issues are adults, but 7% of households with children include a child with a limiting health issue.

As with overall health, these issues are most prevalent in financially struggling households; more than half of those households include someone with a limiting health issue.

Table 12.3. Chronic health issue, disability, or health need

All Jewish households (%)	
All Jewish households	36
Financial situation	
Struggling	54
Enough	34
Extra	24
Well off	26

The most common health issues in OC Jewish households are chronic illness, mental or emotional health issues, and physical disability (Table 12.4).

Table 12.4. Specific health issues

	All Jewish households (%)	Jewish households with a limiting chronic health issue, disability, or special need (%)
	↓	↓
Chronic illness	17	47
Mental or emotional health issues	15	42
Physical disability	13	36
Developmental or intellectual disability	5	15
Complications related to COVID-19	3	8
Substance abuse or addiction	2	5
Dementia	<1	1
Other	7	20

Among Jewish households with a limiting health issue, 83% needed some health services in the past year (Table 12.5). Of those who needed services, 85% reported that the services they received were adequate, and 15% reported that they were not adequate. In all, 8% of all OC Jewish households were not receiving adequate services for their health issues.

Table 12.5. Adequacy of health services received, past year

	All Jewish households (%) ↓	Jewish households with a limiting chronic health issue, disability, or special need (%) ↓
Needed any services	49	83
No services needed	51	17
Total	100	100
Adequacy of services		
Yes, services were adequate	42	85
No, services were not adequate	8	15

There are several common themes mentioned by 43 respondents as to how health services have been inadequate. Some people stated that they had not been able to find a medical provider that fits their needs, sometimes due to a preference for a Jewish doctor. Other issues respondents cited included the cost and difficulty with insurance coverage, as well as transportation barriers. Another concern raised was the overall quality of care. Some members of the community expressed that mental health services and support for those with special needs were lacking. Others mentioned that it was hard to get an appointment with a provider and that wait times can be long.

In their words:

My daughter has mental health issues, and there are not great services available. I get a lot of advice, but actual action has been minimal.

Most of the coverage for my children and myself is covered through insurance. However, most therapists or mental health individuals are out of network, meaning we shoulder the majority of the cost. With multiple kids with needs, we often have to limit therapy to what we can afford not necessarily what is needed for optimal therapeutic improvement.

Mental health care is almost impossible to access through insurance.

CA healthcare for chronic illness is not good. Insurance companies decline claims over and over and make it near impossible to get the care that they agreed to cover.

The majority of OC Jewish adults do not consider it important that services be provided by a Jewish organization (Table 12.6). However, 6% consider Jewish-provided services to be very important and 24% somewhat important.

Table 12.6. Importance of services provided by a Jewish organization

	All Jewish adults (%) ↓	Jewish adults in households with a limiting chronic health issue, disability, or special need (%) ↓
Not at all important	42	45
Not too important	28	19
Somewhat important	24	29
Very important	6	7
Total	100	100

Caregiving and support

Of Jewish households with someone age 65 or older, 18% have an adult who typically needs help with any of the following activities of daily living: doing housework, preparing meals, dressing and undressing, taking a bath or a shower, or walking up and down stairs (not shown in table). This support is most often provided by a relative or friend in the same household (35%) or a paid care provider (30%) (Table 12.7).

Table 12.7. Who provides help with daily activities

	Age 65+ Jewish households with adult who needs help with activity of daily living (%)
	↓
Relative or friend who lives in the same household	35
Paid care provider who does not live in the same household	30
Relative or friend who does not live in the same household	8
Paid care provider who lives in the same household	1
Someone else	14
Do not receive care on a regular basis	30

Fifteen percent of OC Jewish households have someone who manages or provides care for close relatives or friends (Table 12.8). Of households where someone manages or provides care, half (52%) provide care to a parent or in-law and one quarter (24%) provide care for spouses (Table 12.9).

Table 12.8. Manage or provide care for close relatives or friends on a regular basis

	All Jewish households (%)
	↓
No	85
Yes, personally provide care	5
Yes, manage care provided by others	3
Yes, both manage and personally provide care	7
Total	100

Table 12.9. Person(s) that receive regular care

	Jewish households that manage or provide care on a regular basis (%)
	↓
A parent or in-law	52
Your spouse	24
An adult child age 18 or older	11
A child under age 18 with special needs	2
Someone else	17

Seven percent of all Jewish households indicated that in the last three months, a lack of transportation kept them from medical appointments, meetings, work, or getting things for daily living. Three percent of all Jewish households reported that these issues with transportation happened all of the time, and another 4% reported these transportation problems occurred some of the time (not shown in table).

Personal support networks can be an important source of ongoing assistance. Among OC Jewish adults, 7% said that they had no relatives and friends living nearby who they can rely on for help or support (Table 12.10), and 38% reported having just a few people they could rely on for support.

Table 12.10. Personal support network

	All Jewish adults (%)
	↓
No one	7
Just a few people	38
A fair number	35
A lot of people	9
Total	100

Focus on mental health

In light of recent public attention to the mental health and loneliness “epidemic” particularly since the COVID-19 pandemic, this section focuses on both chronic and transient mental and emotional health.

Twelve percent of Jewish adults rated their overall mental health as only fair, and another 3% rated it as poor (Table 12.11).

Table 12.11. Overall rating of mental health or emotional well-being

	All Jewish adults (%)
	↓
Excellent	29
Very good	24
Good	32
Only fair	12
Poor	3
Total	100

Six percent (6%) of Jewish adults felt lonely “often” in the last week, and 1% felt lonely all the time (Table 12.12). Eight percent (8%) said that emotional or mental difficulties hurt their ability to live their day-to-day life, with 5% feeling that way often and 3% feeling that way all the time.

Table 12.12. Emotional health in last week

All Jewish adults

	Felt lonely (%)	Emotional or mental difficulties hurt day-to-day life (%)
Never	47	51
Rarely	25	28
Sometimes	21	12
Often	6	5
All the time	1	3
Total	100	100

Of Orange County Jewish adults, 8% have a diagnosed mental health issue.²⁰ Among all OC Jewish households, 15% include an adult or child in the household with a diagnosed mental or emotional health issue.

Combining chronic mental health measures—self-reported as “poor” or “fair” and clinically diagnosed mental health issues—we estimate that 19% of OC Jewish *adults* are experiencing some type of chronic emotional or mental health issue.

Table 12.13. Mental health by age

	Any chronic mental or emotional health issue
All Jewish adults	20
Age	
22-44	36
45-54	3
55-64	11
65-74	12
75+	12

²⁰ Estimated from responses to questions about chronic health issues.