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2017 GREATER WASHINGTON
JEWISH COMMUNITY
DEMOGRAPHIC STUDY



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2017 Greater Washington Jewish Community Demographic Study

THE MORNINGSTAR FOUNDATION



The Jewish Federation
OF GREATER WASHINGTON

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Counting Jews

Hosea (2:1)

- ❖ *And the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which shall neither be measured nor counted.*

Einstein

- ❖ *Not everything that counts can be counted, and not everything that can be counted counts.*

Methods: Survey Sample

- ❖ Largest-ever survey of local Jewish community (NY had 6,274 respondents)
- ❖ List frame of over 145,000 unique households compiled from organizations
- ❖ Almost 2,000 in primary sample, representative of entire community, had 31% response rate
- ❖ In total, 6,600 respondents interviewed
- ❖ Almost 160 respondents who moved from DC within last 3 years
- ❖ Small RDD survey to ensure complete coverage

	Primary	Supplement	RDD	Total
Completed eligible HH	1,989	4,460	214	6,663
Completed screeners	3,795	6,717	4,793	15,303
Sample size	8,900	33,986	212,559	255,445
Response rate (AAPOR RR3)	30.8%	15.0%	10.8%	

Almost 300,000 Jews in Greater Washington

	2017	2003	Change
Total Jews	295,500	215,000	+ 37%
ADULTS			
Jewish	244,500		
Non-Jewish	70,900		
CHILDREN			
Jewish	51,000		
Non-Jewish	9,100		
Total people	375,500	267,000	+ 40%
Total households	155,200	110,000	+ 41%

- ❖ 6% of area population
- ❖ 3rd largest U.S. Jewish community
(based on federation catchment area)

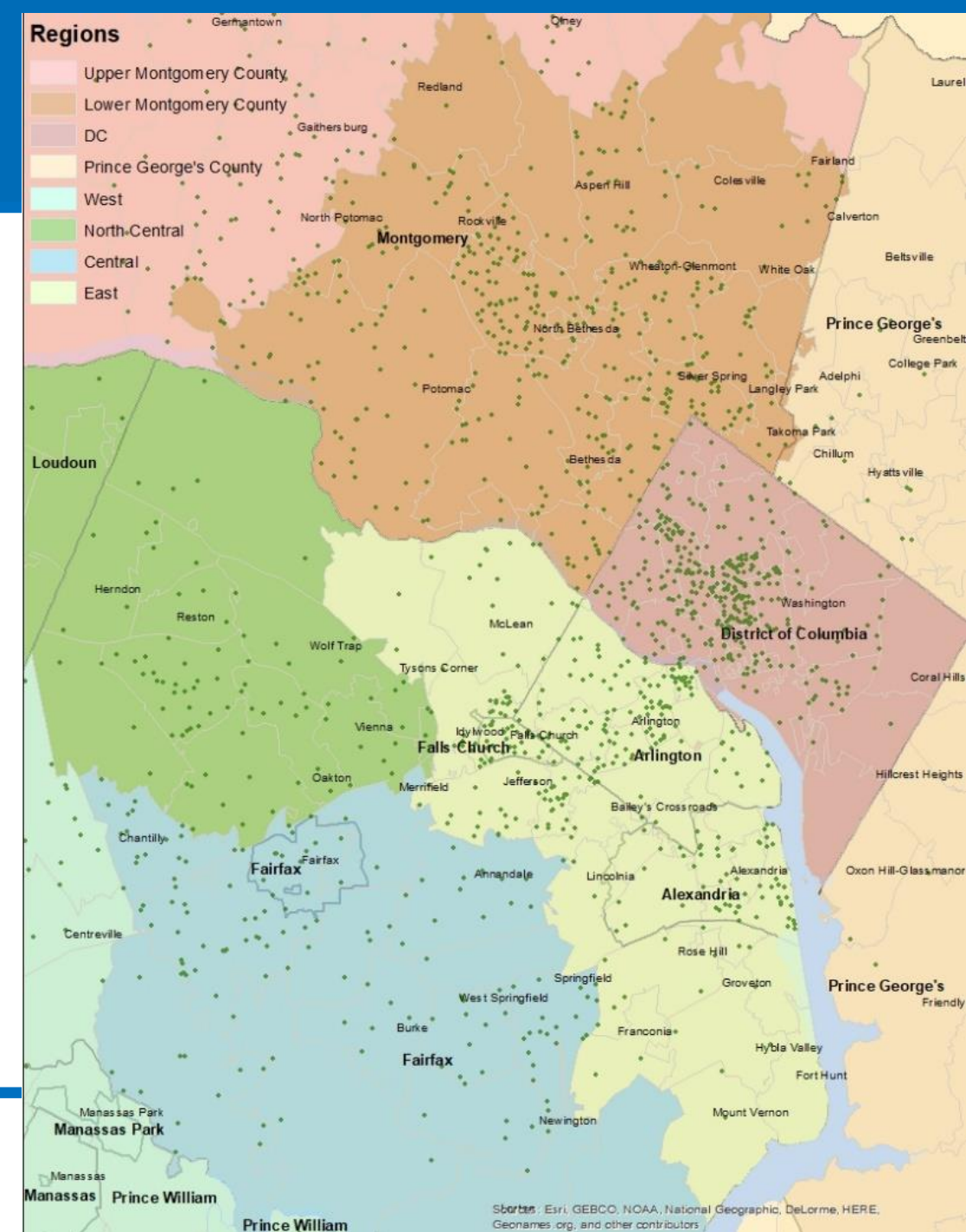
Geographic Distribution

Jewish individuals

Geographic region	%	Count
Washington, DC	19	57,300
Suburban Maryland	39	116,700
Northern Virginia	41	121,500

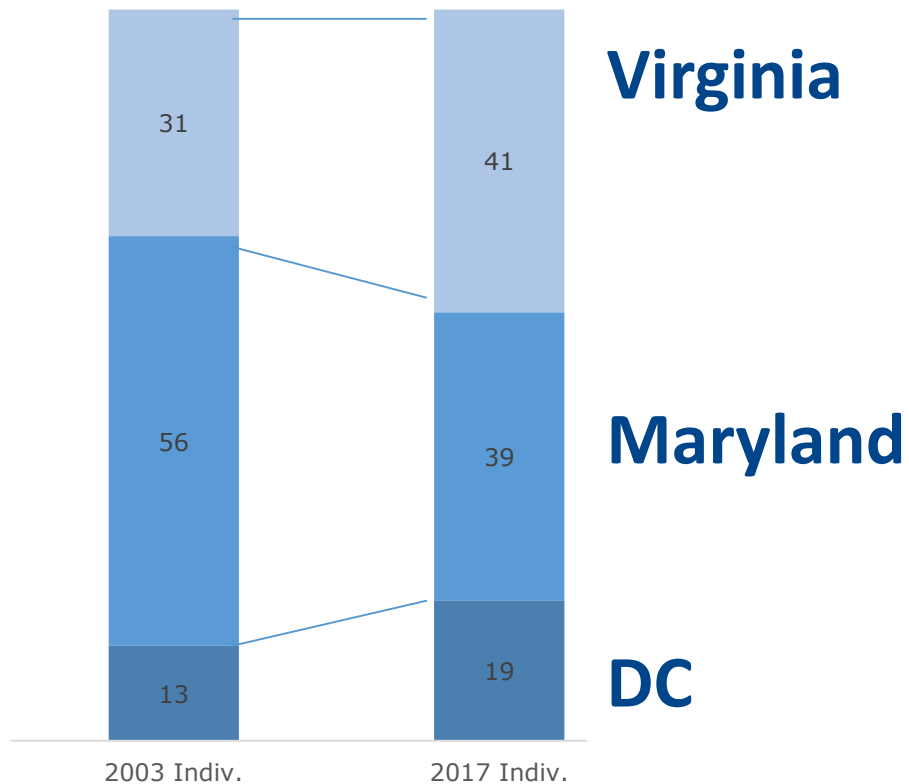
Jewish households

Geographic region	%	Count
Washington, DC	22	34,600
Suburban Maryland	37	56,900
Northern Virginia	41	63,700



37% growth in Jewish community

Regional distribution of Jews 2003-2017



Changes in general population 2000-15

	Growth
Total region	22%
Northern Virginia	31%
Suburban Maryland	14%
DC	13%
DC White non-Hispanic college educated	52%

Community Demographics: DC Area and US Jews

% of J. adults	DC	US
Orthodox	5	10
Conservative	21	18
Reform	29	36
Reconstruct.	3	1
Other	3	5
None	39	30

**DC area has fewer in denominations,
more in no denomination**

% of J. adults	DC	US
18-29	22	21
30-39	21	14
40-49	10	14
50-64	25	30
65+	20	22

**DC area has larger share
of 30-39 year olds**

Community Diversity: DC Area and US Jews

**DC area has larger
share Democrats,
fewer Republicans**

% of J. adults	DC	US
Republican	6	14
Democrat	72	54
Independent	15	32
Other	8	

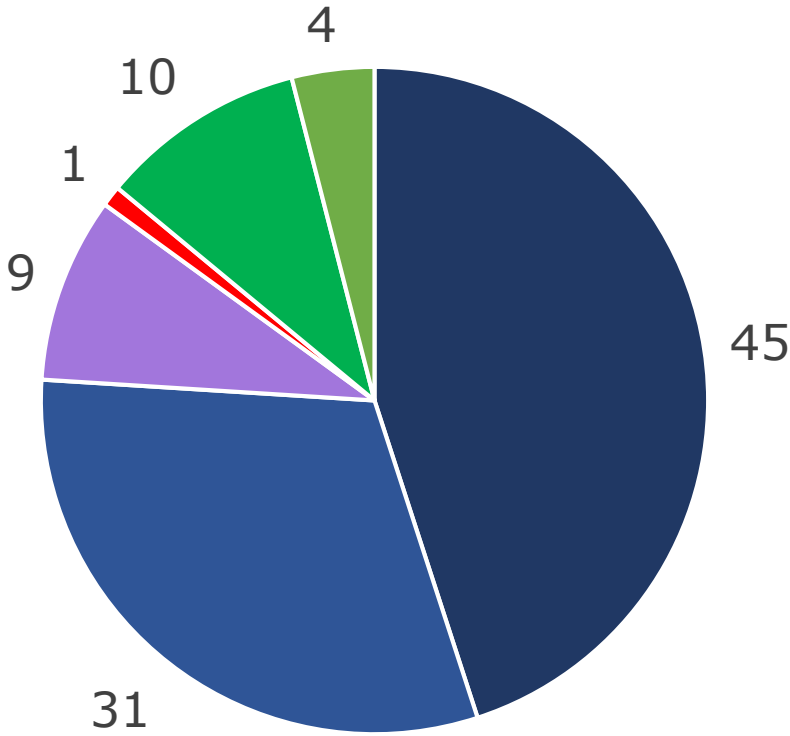
% of Households	DC
Married	67
Children <18	26
Intermarried (of married couples)	53
Health limitation	18

**Intermarriage
rate equal to
all US Jews**

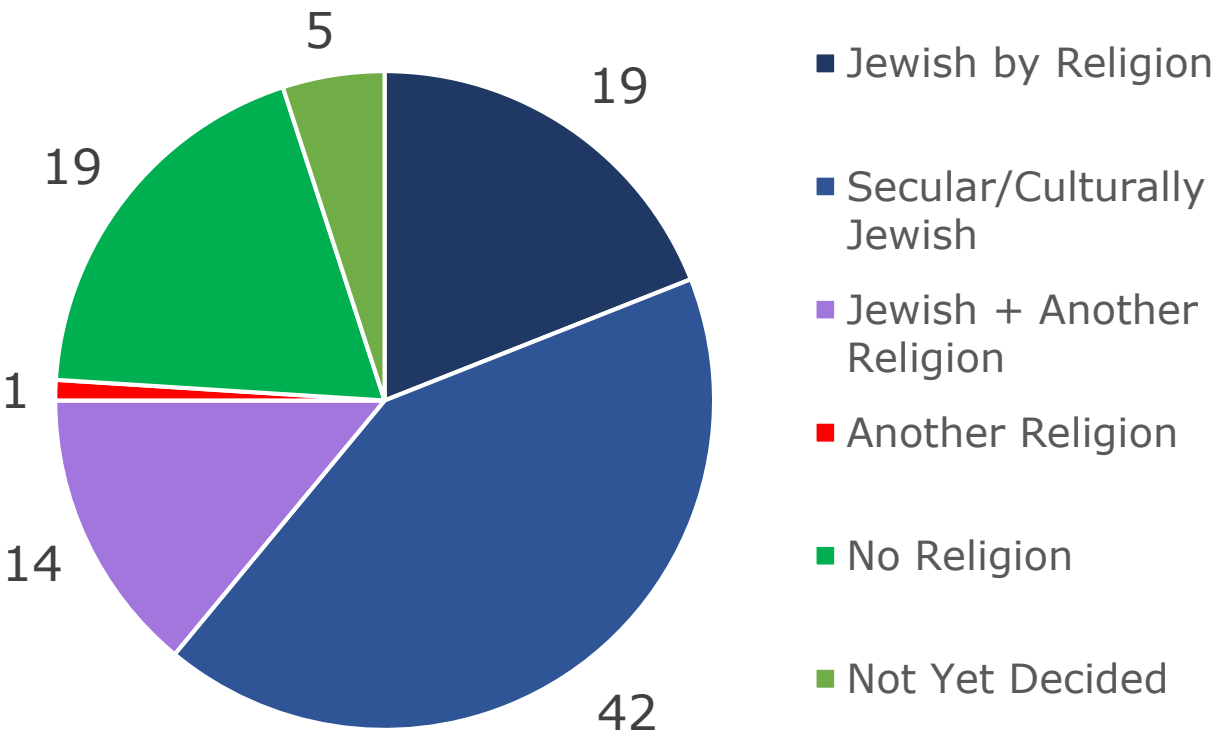
% of J. adults	DC	US
LGBTQ	7	
Person of color	7	8

Jewish Children

Religion raised, all children
Total exclusively Jewish: 76%
Only 1% in another religion



Religion raised, children of intermarriage
Total exclusively Jewish: 61%
Only 1% in another religion



- Jewish by Religion
- Secular/Culturally Jewish
- Jewish + Another Religion
- Another Religion
- No Religion
- Not Yet Decided

Synagogues: More Jews attend than belong

% of Jewish HH	%
Synagogue Member HH	26
Brick and Mortar, Pays Dues	18

% of Jewish adults	%
Any Services In Past Year	75
Service Monthly or More	20
High Holy Days	53

In terms of Jewish adults, levels of synagogue membership in the Metro DC area (31% of Jewish adults) are lower than that of the rest of the country (39%).

Synagogue type (% of Member HH)	
Brick-and-mortar synagogue, pays dues	69
Brick-and-mortar synagogue, doesn't pay dues	8
Independent Minyan	16
Chabad	5
Non-local congregation	13

Comparing the number of reported member households of “brick and mortar synagogues” over time, there were 26,500 households in 2003 and 25,600 households in 2017.

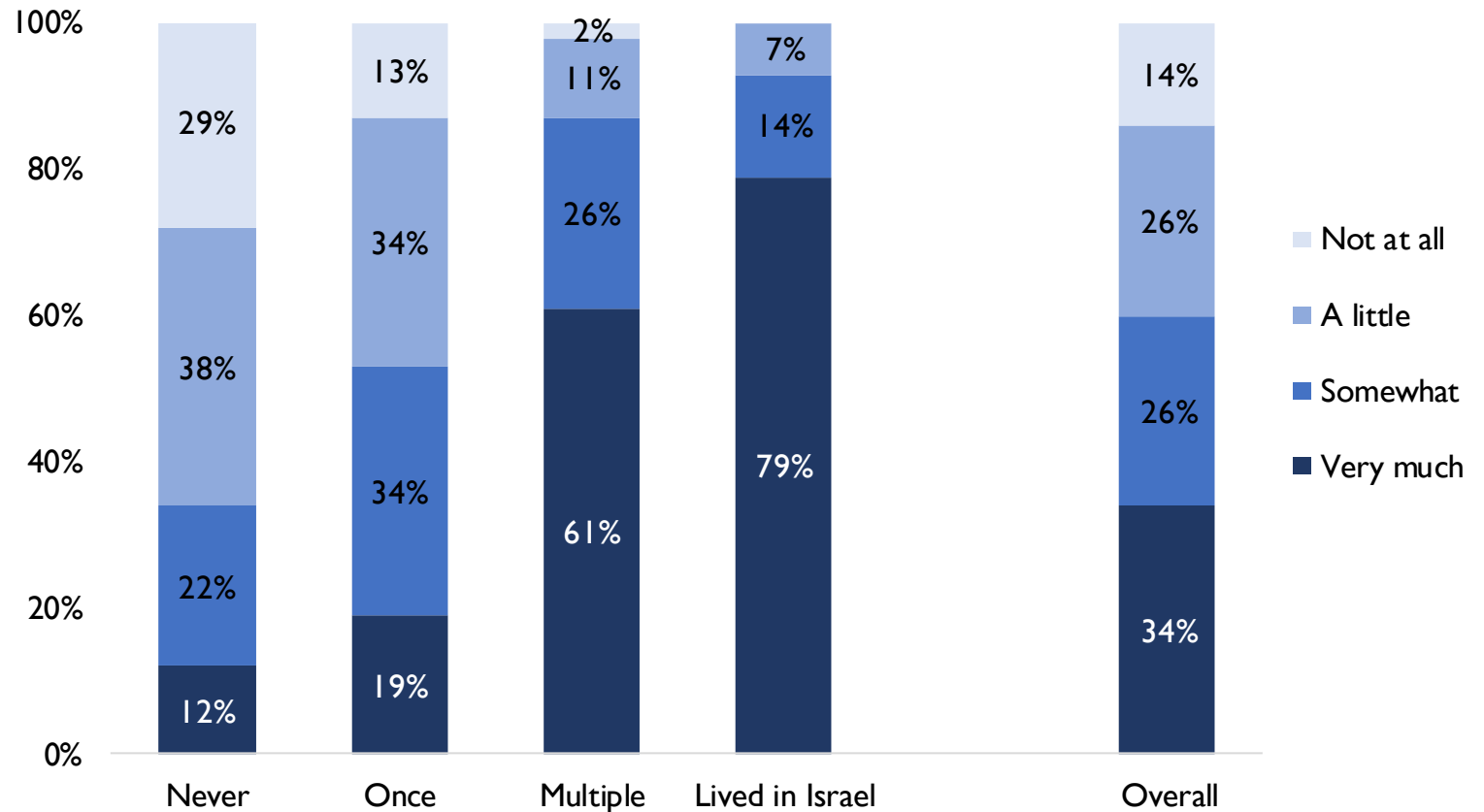
Israel travel and attachment

68% have been to Israel (National 43%)

- 32% never
- 30% once
- 31% multiple times
- 7% lived in Israel/Israeli

34% very connected to Israel (National 30%)

Israel travel and emotional connection



Patterns of Jewish Engagement

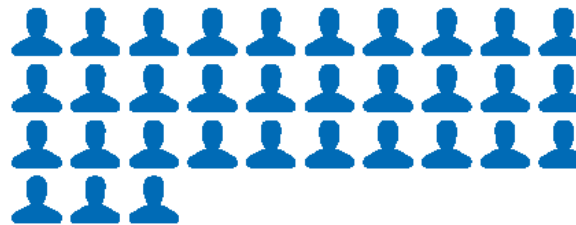
18% Immersed

Highly engaged in all aspects of Jewish life



33% Involved

Involved in most aspects of Jewish life



17% Cultural

Participates in cultural and personal activities



18% Holiday

Participates in holiday activities



14% Minimal

Little or no involvement in Jewish life



❖ Statistically-created groups based on Jewish behaviors

❖ Unique to Metro DC Jews

Is Jewish Engagement the same as Denomination?

	Immersed	Involved	Cultural	Holiday	Minimal	
Orthodox	79	9	1	10	0	100
Conservative	33	47	8	10	1	100
Reform	12	43	19	20	6	100
Other	28	36	12	18	7	100
None	4	21	27	25	23	100

- Helps to differentiate within denominations... including **NONE**
- All denominations (except Orthodox), represented in all Engagement groups

Who is least and most engaged? Age and Jewish Engagement

AGE	Immersed	Involved	Cultural	Holiday	Minimal	
18-29	19	32	14	23	12	100
30-39	15	33	16	26	10	100
40-49	18	30	16	16	21	100
50-64	21	32	18	18	10	100
65+	15	32	28	13	12	100

- **18-29 and 30-39 evenly distributed**
- **40-49 largest share of Minimally Involved**
- **50-64 largest share of Immersed**
- **65+ largest share of Cultural**

Immersed (18%)

“We have a strong, vibrant and engaged young Jewish community in DC that will grow to become a strong, vibrant and engaged older Jewish community in several years.”

Demographics	%
Has children	24
Intermarried (of married)	10
Raising children Jewish	99

Belonging	%
Synagogue Member	86
Children in Jewish Ed (K-12)	78
Donate to Jewish Cause	94

Behaviors	%
Attend Jewish program	91
Volunteer Any Org.	65
Volunteer Jewish Org.	51
Reads Israel news weekly	72
High Holy Day svc	98

Attitudes	%
Very attached to Israel	63
Very connected to local community	57

Involved (33%)

“Number 1 reason to be part of the community is so our kids feel a sense of belonging, and I feel a natural support group. It is a true community feeling.”

Demographics	%
Has children	22
Intermarried (of married)	31
Raising children Jewish	89

Belonging	%
Synagogue Member	42
Children in Jewish Ed (K-12)	41
Donate to Jewish Cause	81

Behaviors	%
Attend Jewish program	64
Volunteer Any Org.	40
Volunteer Jewish Org.	15
Reads Israel news weekly	48
High Holy Day svc.	93

Attitudes	%
Very attached to Israel	36
Very connected to local community	14

Cultural (17%)

“I’m proud to be associated, through my ethnicity and culture, if not religion, with so many people doing so much good.”

Demographics	%
Has children	14
Intermarried (of married)	64
Raising children Jewish	81

Belonging	%
Synagogue Member	<1
Children in Jewish Ed (K-12)	9
Donate to Jewish Cause	63

Behaviors	%
Attend Jewish program	54
Volunteer Any Org.	51
Volunteer Jewish Org.	11
Reads Israel news weekly	54
High Holy Day svc.	6

Attitudes	%
Very attached to Israel	32
Very connected to local community	2

Holiday (18%)

“I am not a formally religious person and my experiences are private and spiritual. I go to High Holy Day services at a conservative congregation because I love the rabbi... The liturgy means very little to me, but I feel I am a Jew and am proud of it.”

Demographics	%
Has children	23
Intermarried (of married)	55
Raising children Jewish	87

Belonging	%
Synagogue Member	7
Children in Jewish Ed (K-12)	14
Donate to Jewish Cause	35

Behaviors	%
Attend Jewish program	30
Volunteer Any Org.	32
Volunteer Jewish Org.	3
Reads Israel news weekly	13
High Holy Day svc.	55

Attitudes	%
Very attached to Israel	11
Very connected to local community	1

Minimal (14%)

“I like being around my friends who are Jewish where we can make occasional Jewish jokes or when I understand Jewish cultural references in the media, but other than that I don’t feel as though I have many Jewish ‘experiences.’”

Demographics	%
Has children	25
Intermarried (of married)	94
Raising children Jewish	58

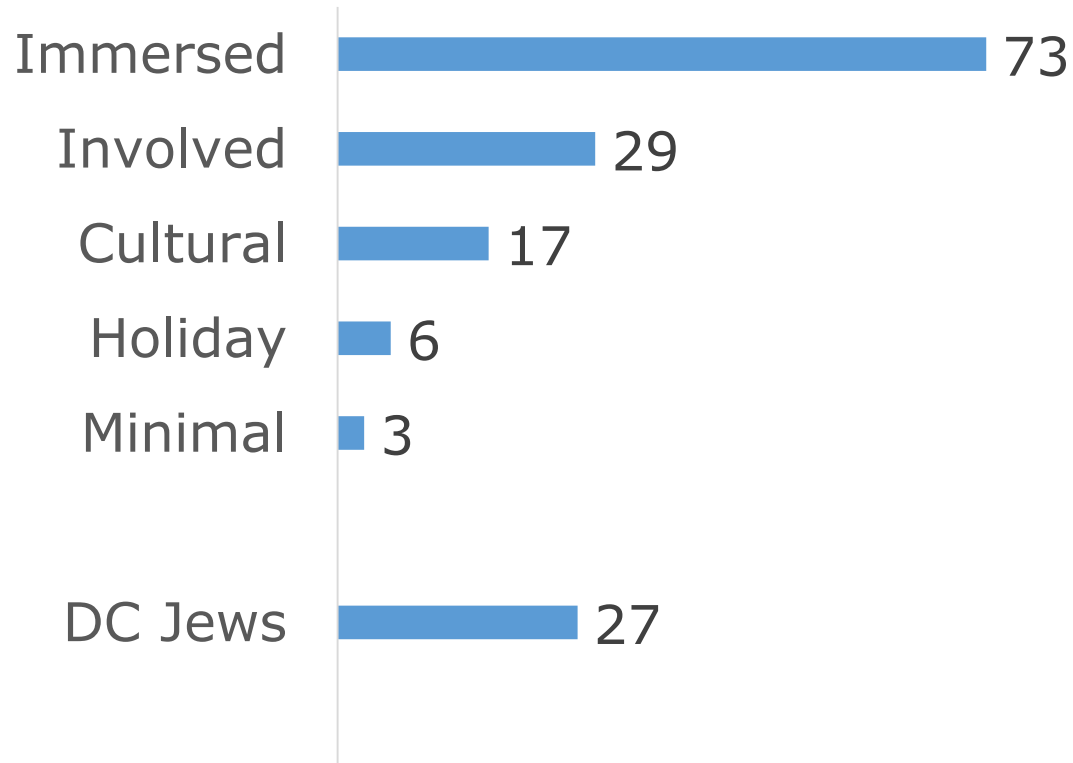
Belonging	%
Synagogue Member	<1
Children in Jewish Ed (K-12)	<1
Donate to Jewish Cause	19

Behaviors	%
Attend Jewish program	6
Volunteer Any Org.	20
Volunteer Jewish Org.	1
Reads Israel news weekly	17
High Holy Day svc.	<1

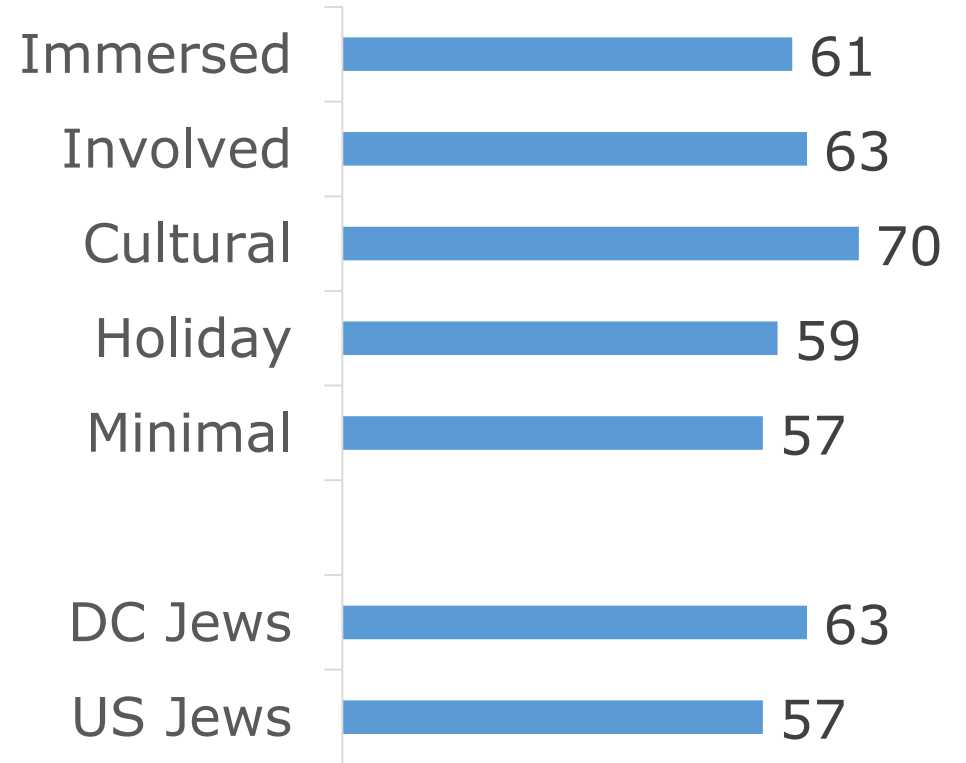
Attitudes	%
Very attached to Israel	18
Very connected to local community	<1

Meaning of being Jewish: Similarities and Differences

Judaism part of daily life (% very much)



Working for Justice and Equality essential to being Jewish (% agree)



Download report and appendices

www.brandeis.edu/cmjs

www.brandeis.edu/ssri/communitystudies/dcreport

Public use dataset will be posted in March

Report chapters:

- 1: Introduction, how to read report
- 2: Population estimates and demographics
- 3: Geography
- 4: Index of Jewish engagement
- 5-9: Special topics
- 10: Conclusions, with respondent comments

Israel (2/3)	Feels a Connection Israel: Not at All	Feels a Connection Israel: A Little	Feels a Connection Israel: Somewhat	Feels a Connection Israel: Very Much
Overall	14%	26%	26%	34%
Immersed	3%	9%	24%	63%
Involved	7%	25%	32%	36%
Communal	18%	23%	27%	32%
Holiday	28%	42%	19%	11%
Minimal	29%	27%	27%	18%
DC	20%	25%	25%	30%
Maryland	13%	23%	27%	38%
Virginia	14%	28%	27%	31%

**Comparison Chart
Appendix
has detailed
breakdowns that
don't appear in
report**

Thank you to...



**Members of the study
advisory committee**

**Organizations that provided
contact information**

**The 6,663 survey
respondents**