



The 2013 Jewish Community Needs Assessment Study of Southern New Jersey

Burlington County | Camden County | Gloucester County



An In-Depth Look at Jewish Pop: What Does Our Future Look Like?

Introduction:

Jewish Pop is a comprehensive market research study initiated by the Jewish Federation of Southern New Jersey in the fall of 2013. This study focused on Burlington, Camden, and Gloucester Counties to better understand the changing size, needs, and wants of our South Jersey Jewish community. It reflects basic demographic information, levels of Jewish engagement, and the current demand for social services under Jewish auspices. The results of the study can - and will - be used to plan programming over the next decade by identifying key trends and opportunities, for both the Jewish Federation and other organizations and institutions that serve the Jewish community.

The response:

Following standard sampling size protocol, Jewish Pop aimed to survey 300 households per county - a total of 900 homes. This would make the study statistically valid and give us a snapshot of Jewish South Jersey. Overwhelmingly, over 3,000 people completed the survey! We captured replies from all three counties and from over 70 zip codes.

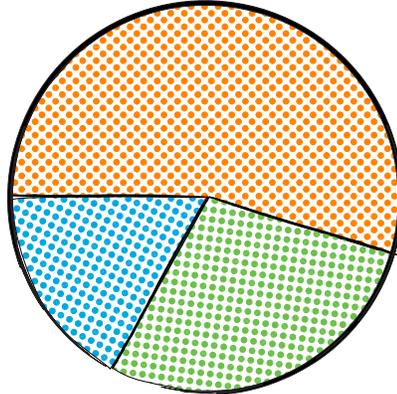
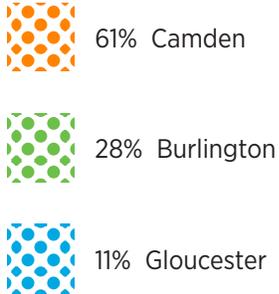
What did we learn?

The sheer volume of responses tells us we live in a very engaged and dedicated community. Yet, it also tells the story of declining rates of participation in Jewish life by a growing minority of individuals, especially younger adults. The study shows that our community faces a wide array of challenges, including disabilities, financial issues, and social and emotional stressors. Finally, the study estimated a growth of 15 percent in our tri-county Jewish community since our last study in 1991.

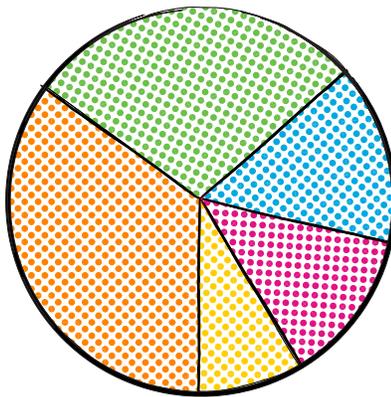
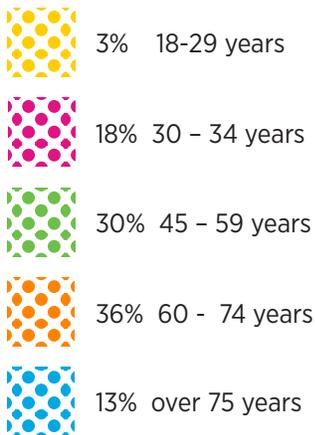


What does the Jewish population of Southern New Jersey look like?

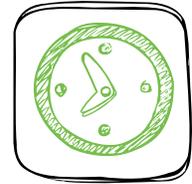
Jewish population by county:



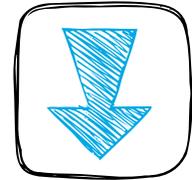
Jewish population by age:



A large proportion of households do not have children under 18 living at home.



Median age is 58.



Seniors have strong roots in this area - over 20% have lived in the tri-county area for over 30 years.

NOW:

Estimated 21,575 Jewish homes, with an approximate population size of 56,700.



There is a mix of household sizes and structures:
15% live alone,
14% include seniors,
35% have children,
and 78% are married or living with a partner.

THEN:

In 1991, the number of Jewish households was approx. 24,000, with a total population size of 49,200.



Health & Social Services

Findings:

- Seniors - a growing population - comprise a large part of the community, increasing the need for services.
- Community members deal with a wide array of challenges, including disabilities, financial issues, and social and emotional stressors.
- Physical disabilities, coping with depression, and caring for or arranging care for an ill or elderly relative or friend are the most common challenges.
- There is a measurable presence of individuals with special needs in our community - across the range of ages, geographies, and disabilities. According to the CDC, the incidence of children on the autism spectrum is currently estimated at 1 in 88 (about 1 percent) - our community reports 3 percent.
- Most seniors want to age in place and believe they have the family and friends around them to allow them to do so. Given that 2 in 10 seniors have a serious or ongoing physical illness - or live with someone who does - there is some question about how realistic the goal to age in place is.

Role of Jewish Organizations and Agencies:

- Jewish organizations and agencies are not the major supports to help our community cope with mental and physical health issues.
 - Respondents are more likely to turn to Jewish entities for help in caregiving and organizing care for ill and elderly relatives or friends, as well as in coping with dementia and Alzheimer's.
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Jewish Education & Engagement

Overall, the study shows a high level - yet changing patterns - of Jewish engagement in the community. It likewise tells the story of declining rates of participation in Jewish life. In addition to synagogues, there are many other points of engagement to enhance Jewish life and identity.

Young Children (age 0-4):

- Jewish education begins early and continues through primary grades.
- Two-thirds are currently enrolled in preschool in a Jewish setting, with most planning for their children to continue into some sort of a part-time religious school program.

Older Children (age 5-17):

- Religious school (up to and including Bar/Bat Mitzvah) is important, Hebrew High School and additional education less so.
- Informal experiences are often more valued than formal settings. Youth groups and camp attendance are important parts of the Jewish social interaction offered to these children.



Jewish Identity & Connection

Affiliation/Membership:

- This is a diverse community – respondents identify with over a dozen denominations/movements, but most often Conservative and Reform.
- Forty-two percent belong to area synagogues (about the same as in 1991, but higher than national estimates).
- JCC membership has doubled during the same time.
- Those that identify as “Just Jewish” are on the rise.
- Most adults (87 percent) with a minor child or grandchild at home are raising them as ‘solely Jewish.’

Connections:

- Most respondents feel connected to the Jewish community in Southern New Jersey.
- Most respondents feel a personal connection to Israel but when asked, sending children to Israel is not a priority.
- Most respondents in Camden and Burlington Counties find Jewish organizations conveniently located, but acknowledge these are not always the first line of defense.
- About one-quarter (22 percent) do not find local Jewish organizations welcoming, and more than half (56 percent) do not find them affordable.
- Volunteering is very important to our community and a good entry point to Jewish organizations.



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THE **POWER** OF COMMUNITY.

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