

2022-23
GREATER PORTLAND
JEWISH
COMMUNITY STUDY
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Jewish Federation[®]
OF GREATER PORTLAND



Brandeis

COHEN CENTER FOR
MODERN JEWISH STUDIES

STEINHARDT SOCIAL
RESEARCH INSTITUTE

Recommended citation:

Boxer, M., Brookner, M.A., Bankier-Karp, A., Chandler, A., Levine, D., Martin, A., Magidin de Kramer, R., Friedman, I., Feinberg, M., Aronson, J.K., & Saxe, L. (2023). *2022-23 Greater Portland Jewish Community Study: Executive Summary*. Waltham, MA: Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies and Steinhardt Social Research Institute, Brandeis University.

www.brandeis.edu/cmjs/community-studies/portland-report.html

© 2023 Brandeis University Maurice and Marilyn Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies
www.brandeis.edu/cmjs

The Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies (CMJS), founded in 1980, is dedicated to providing independent, high-quality research on issues related to contemporary Jewish life.

The Cohen Center is also the home of the Steinhardt Social Research Institute (SSRI). Established in 2005, SSRI uses innovative research methods to collect and analyze sociodemographic data on the Jewish community.

JEWISH FEDERATION OF GREATER PORTLAND

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The *2022-23 Greater Portland Jewish Community Study* was made possible through the efforts and support of the following groups:

Funders

Jewish Federation of Greater Portland
Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation
The Harold and Arlene Schnitzer Family Fund of OJCF
 Jordan Schnitzer
Scott and Elena Shleifer Foundation
Goodman Family
 Doug Goodman
 Greg Goodman and Susan Schnitzer
 Mark and Christi Goodman
Jewish Federation of Lane County
Martha Soltesz

Study Selection Committee

Emily Benoit
Marc Blattner
Karen Blauer
Rabbi Elizabeth Dunsker
Josh Kashinsky
Simon Gottheiner
Caron Blau Rothstein
Ed Tonkin

Technical Advisory Committee

Marc Blattner
Rabbi Elizabeth Dunsker
Joe Hertzberg
Stuart Kirschner
Debbie Plawner
Jeff Robinson
Caron Blau Rothstein
Kara Schnoes

CMJS/SSRI ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Maurice and Marilyn Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies (CMJS) research team is grateful to the Jewish Federation of Greater Portland for the opportunity to collaborate on the *2022-23 Greater Portland Jewish Community Study*. We are particularly grateful to Caron Blau Rothstein, Chief Allocations and Engagement Officer at the Jewish Federation, and Marc Blattner, President and CEO, who were our partners in every step of the work. Caron, Marc, and the devoted members of the community study advisory committee helped us learn about the community and ensured that our work would be of the highest quality and utility for the Jewish community in Greater Portland. They provided valuable input into the study design, questionnaire, and report. We also thank the 2,560 respondents who completed the survey. Without their willingness to spend time answering questions about their lives, there could be no study.

We are grateful for the work of the University of New Hampshire Survey Center, our data-collection partner for this study. Zachary Azem was our main point of contact, survey instrument programmer, and supervisor for data collection. Sean McKinley was instrumental in testing the survey. Robert Durant managed the call-center operation, including training and supervising callers, fielding callbacks, and countless other tasks. We would also like to thank the callers who collected data from respondents; the study would not have been possible without them.

This project also would not have been possible without the assistance of a large team of our colleagues and students at CMJS. We are deeply appreciative of their efforts. Daniel Nussbaum and Joshua Mandell worked on the estimate of the adult Jewish-by-religion population of Greater Portland as part of the Steinhardt Social Research Institute's American Jewish Population Project. They also prepared all choropleth maps used in this report and the technical appendices. Hannah Taylor helped code responses to open-ended questions. Deborah Grant provided editorial and design assistance in preparing this report for publication. Masha Lokshin facilitated many of the behind-the-scenes logistics for the study.

We are also grateful to friends, family, and former CMJS employees who consulted on this study. Matthew Feinberg assisted in developing the survey sample. Robin Waldman advised on development of the survey instrument.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Demographic Snapshot

- The Greater Portland Jewish community numbers approximately 75,500 individuals, of whom 56,600 are Jewish. They reside in 31,100 households that include:
 - 45,100 Jewish adults
 - 11,500 Jewish children
 - 15,100 non-Jewish adults
 - 3,800 non-Jewish children
- The mean age of Jewish adults in Greater Portland is 48 and the median age is 46, slightly younger than the national median age of Jewish adults, 49. Both the mean and median ages of all Jewish individuals in Greater Portland, including children, are 42.
- Twenty-nine percent of all Jewish households in Greater Portland include at least one child under age 18.
- The individual intermarriage rate (i.e., the proportion of married Jewish adults with a non-Jewish spouse) in Greater Portland is 46%, slightly higher than the national average of 42%.
- Fifty-two percent of Jewish adults in Greater Portland do not identify with any particular denomination of Judaism. Five percent identify as Orthodox, 8% as Conservative, 23% as Reform, and 12% identify with other denominations.
- Seven percent of Jewish adults in Greater Portland identify as LGBTQ+. Similarly, 7% of Jewish adults are Israeli citizens, and 7% grew up in Russian-speaking households.
- Seven percent of Jewish individuals in Greater Portland, including 16% of Jewish children, identify as People of Color. Thirteen percent of Jewish individuals, including 26% of Jewish children, identify as Hispanic or with any racial group other than white.
- Twenty-four percent of Jewish households in Greater Portland reside in Northeast Portland. Nineteen percent live in the Western Suburbs, 17% in Southwest Washington and North Portland, 14% in Southeast Portland, 13% in Southwest Portland, 8% in Northwest Portland, and 5% in the Other Suburbs.
- Twenty-three percent of Jewish adults in Greater Portland were raised in the region, including 13% who have lived there for their entire lives other than for college and/or graduate studies.
- Forty-nine percent of Jewish adults in Greater Portland have lived in the region for 20 or more years, and another 17% of Jewish adults have resided in the area for 10-19 years. Thirty-four percent of Jewish adults moved to the area in the past decade, including 15% who have resided in the area for fewer than five years.
- Seventy-seven percent of Jewish adults in Greater Portland identify politically as very liberal or liberal. Another 13% describe themselves as moderate, and 10% reported that they are conservative or very conservative.

Patterns of Jewish Engagement

- The Index of Jewish Engagement focuses on Jewish behaviors—the ways in which individuals occupy and involve themselves in Jewish life in Greater Portland—not on self-identification.
- Engagement groups include people of all ages and denominational identities.
- Demographic characteristics are related to membership in these five engagement groups.
- The Index can be used to identify opportunities to improve communal planning based on people’s different needs and interests.
- Five distinct patterns of behavior emerge from the data.
 - Minimally Involved (28% of Jewish adults): Characterized by minimal participation in Jewish life.
 - Cultural (32% of Jewish adults): Characterized by having high levels of participation in Jewish cultural activities, but little activity with Jewish organizations.
 - Ritual (12% of Jewish adults): Characterized by high levels of participation in Jewish ritual and religious activities.
 - Communal (17% of Jewish adults): Characterized by high rates of synagogue membership and participation in other Jewish organizations.
 - Immersed (11% of Jewish adults): Characterized by high involvement in all dimensions of Jewish life.

Jewish Children

- Among the 15,300 children living in Jewish households in the Greater Portland Jewish community, 11,500 (75%) are being raised Jewish, either exclusively or with another religion.
- Among the 3,800 children not being raised Jewish, 1,800 are being raised in no religion, 300 are being raised exclusively in another religion, and 1,700 have parents who either have not yet determined how they will be raised or did not provide enough information to assess their Jewish identities.
- Nearly all (97%) children of two Jewish parents in Greater Portland are being raised Jewish. The remaining children of two Jewish parents are being raised in no religion or in another religion.
- Among children of intermarried parents in the Greater Portland Jewish community, 75% are being raised Jewish in some way.
- Twelve percent of Jewish children not yet enrolled in kindergarten were enrolled in a Jewish preschool or early childhood program during the 2022-23 school year.
- Seventeen percent of Jewish students in grades K-12 were enrolled in some form of Jewish school during the 2022-23 school year. This share includes 4% in a Jewish day school and 13% in a part-time school. Ten percent of Jewish students in grades K-12 took private classes or were tutored in Jewish topics.
- Thirty-six percent of Jewish K-12 students attended a Jewish summer camp as a camper or staff member in 2022. This includes 16% who attended a day camp and 21% who attended an overnight camp. Thirty-three percent of Jewish K-12 students attended a non-Jewish camp of either variety.

- Thirty-five percent of age-eligible Jewish children have celebrated a bar, bat, or b' mitzvah ceremony, and another 9% plan to celebrate in the future. Of the children who have celebrated, 74% held a service through a synagogue, 6% held a service or activity without a synagogue but with a rabbi, 6% held a service or activity with neither a synagogue nor a rabbi, and 14% did not hold a service or activity.
- Nineteen percent of households in Greater Portland with age-eligible children receive books from PJ Library or PJ Our Way.

Congregations and Ritual Life

- Twenty percent of Jewish households in Greater Portland belong to a synagogue or other Jewish congregation, lower than the national average of 35%. However, 12% of households belong to more than one congregation.
- Fifteen percent of Jewish adults in Greater Portland previously belonged to a congregation at some point in their adult lives but do not currently belong, and 60% never belonged to a congregation. Among the Minimally Involved group, the vast majority have never belonged to a congregation (93%).
- Forty-seven percent of Jewish adults in Greater Portland attended Jewish religious services at least once in the past year, either in-person or online, including 31% who are not members of any Jewish congregation. Twelve percent of Jewish adults attended services at least once a month.
- During the 2022 High Holidays, 34% of Jewish adults in Greater Portland attended High Holiday services. Most attended in person, either with a congregation in Greater Portland (59%) or a congregation outside the area (5%). Twenty-two percent of Jewish adults attended High Holiday services online with a local congregation, and 20% attended High Holiday services online with a congregation outside Greater Portland.
- Half of Jewish adults in Greater Portland marked Shabbat in some way during the past year, including 19% who did so every week or nearly every week. The most common ways Jewish adults in Greater Portland mark Shabbat are by lighting candles on Friday night (40%), spending time with family and friends (36%), and having a special Shabbat meal (35%).
- Seventy-five percent of Jewish adults in Greater Portland light Hanukkah candles in a typical year, and 58% attended a seder in 2022. Twenty-seven percent of Jewish adults fasted on Yom Kippur in 2022, and 25% keep any laws of kashrut.

Organizations and Philanthropy

- Eight percent of Jewish adults in Greater Portland belong to an informal or grassroots Jewish organization.
- Two percent of Jewish adults in Greater Portland are members of the Mittleman Jewish Community Center.
- Thirty-three percent of Jewish adults in Greater Portland attended at least one Jewish program in the past year. Twenty percent participated in programs sponsored by a Jewish congregation, and 10% participated in programs sponsored by the Jewish Federation of Greater Portland. Of Jewish adults younger than age 40, 16% participated in programs sponsored by a local Jewish student organization, and 10% participated in programs sponsored by a local Jewish young professional organization.

- Jewish adults in Greater Portland most commonly access information about local Jewish activities, news, and events from the Internet (42%) or friends and family (40%).
- Sixty-eight percent of Jewish adults in Greater Portland expressed an opinion about how welcoming Jewish organizations in the area are to people like them. Thirty percent felt Jewish organizations are very welcoming, 27% somewhat welcoming, 10% not too welcoming, and 1% not at all welcoming.
- Many Jewish adults in Greater Portland participated in informal Jewish cultural activities in the past year, including 95% who talked about Jewish topics; 90% who ate Jewish foods; 87% who read books, watched movies or television shows, or listened to music that is Jewish-focused, and 74% who read publications from Jewish organizations. Half (50%) of Jewish adults in Greater Portland read or posted about Jewish life on social media, 45% studied Jewish texts, and 28% decorated the exterior of their homes for Jewish holidays.
- Nearly half (48%) of Jewish adults in Greater Portland have a mezuzah on an exterior door of their home.
- Seventeen percent of Jewish adults in Greater Portland usually wear a Jewish symbol in public, such as Jewish-themed jewelry or a *kippah*, and 10% have visible body art with a Jewish theme, such as a Star of David or a Hebrew word.
- Forty-seven percent of Jewish adults in Greater Portland volunteered anywhere in the past year, including 19% who volunteered for or with a Jewish organization.
- Seventy-eight percent of Jewish households in Greater Portland made charitable donations in the past year, including 41% that donated to Jewish organizations. Five percent of Jewish households donated to the Jewish Federation of Greater Portland.

Community Connections

- Ninety-seven percent of Jewish adults in Greater Portland feel at least some sense of belonging to the Jewish people, including 46% who feel this connection a great deal.
- Sixty-four percent of Jewish adults in Greater Portland feel at least some connection to the local Jewish community, including 9% who feel this connection a great deal.
- Forty percent of Jewish adults feel at least some connection to an online Jewish community, including 7% who feel this connection a great deal.
- Forty-nine percent of Jewish adults say they have at least some close Jewish friends, including 13% who say most or all of their close friends are Jewish.
- The four most common barriers to participation in the Jewish community cited by Jewish adults in Greater Portland are a lack of activities of interest (30%), traffic or location making it difficult to attend (29%), not being confident in Jewish knowledge (21%), and expense (21%).
- Sixty-three percent of Jewish adults in are very concerned about antisemitism around the world, and 60% are very concerned about antisemitism in the United States. By contrast, only 32% are very concerned about antisemitism in Greater Portland.
- Eighteen percent of Jewish adults personally experienced one or more antisemitic incidents in the past year. For 31% of Jewish adults, a fear of antisemitism and their concern for their safety or comfort as a Jew has caused them to change their behavior in the past year.

Connections to Israel

- A minority of Jewish adults in Greater Portland are emotionally attached to Israel, with 18% feeling very attached and 28% feeling somewhat attached. Taken together, this proportion (46%) is lower than among all US Jewish adults (58%).
- Fifty percent of Jewish adults in Greater Portland have traveled to Israel. This share is similar to that of US Jews in general, of whom 45% have traveled to Israel.
- Thirty percent of age-eligible Jewish adults (younger than age 51) in Greater Portland have participated in a Birthright Israel trip.
- About half (48%) of Jewish adults in Greater Portland follow the news on Israel, with 12% following the news on Israel very closely and 36% somewhat closely.
- Twenty-six percent of Jewish adults in Greater Portland self-identify as Zionists. Fifty-two percent do not identify as Zionists, and the remaining 22% either are not sure how they identify or prefer not to say.
- Ninety-seven percent of Jewish adults in Greater Portland consider it important for Israel to be a democratic state, and 65% consider it important for Israel to be a Jewish state. Eighty-seven percent consider it important for Israel to exist for the Jewish people, now and in the future. Eighty-two percent believe Israel is under constant threat from hostile neighbors who seek its destruction, but only 43% believe Israel lives up to its values with respect to human rights.

Financial Well-Being and Health Needs

- Twenty-eight percent of Jewish households in Greater Portland include at least one person who is limited in their work, school, or activities by some sort of health issue, special need, or disability. The most common health issues are mental or emotional health problems, faced by 18% of households, and chronic illnesses, experienced by 15% of households.
- Forty-two percent of Jewish households in Greater Portland require any of a variety of health services, whether they were received or not. The most commonly needed health service is mental health treatment, required by 34% of households.
- Among the 31,100 Jewish households in Greater Portland, 12% are serving as primary caregivers or managing care for a close relative or friend, separate from routine childcare.
- Sixty-six percent of Jewish adults in Greater Portland have attained at least a bachelor's degree, a slightly higher proportion than in the national Jewish community.
- Close to two thirds (65%) of Jewish adults who are not in high school are working, including 50% working full-time in one job or position, 9% working part-time in one job or position, and 6% working in multiple positions. Sixteen percent of Jewish adults are retired.
- Twenty-six percent of Jewish households say either that they cannot make ends meet (4%) or are just managing to make ends meet (23%).
- While 16% of Jewish households in Greater Portland have an income of \$200,000 or more, the same proportion (16%) have an income of less than \$50,000.