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Volunteerism among American Jews

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INTRODUCTION

VOLUNTEERISM IS A VITAL COMPONENT OF JEWISH

COMMUNAL LIFE. Deeply rooted in Jewish tradition as *gmilut chasadim* (acts of loving kindness), volunteerism not only benefits those individuals and organizations receiving assistance, it also enables Jews to play an active role in nourishing and enriching their community. Jewish communal organizations, including Federations, have a critical interest in understanding patterns of volunteerism among Jews as a first step in promoting increased levels of community volunteerism.

This report uses data from the National Jewish Population Survey 2000-01 (NJPS) to examine who volunteers for Jewish organizations, who volunteers for non-Jewish organizations only, and who has the highest relative likelihood of engaging in Jewish rather than non-Jewish volunteerism. More specifically, it looks at how Jewish and non-Jewish volunteerism vary by critical demographic factors and Jewish connections.

Key findings from the analysis include:

- ▶ Under half (43%) of Jews volunteered for any organization in the year before being interviewed for NJPS, including a quarter (25%) who volunteered for Jewish organizations and 18% for non-Jewish organizations only.
- ▶ Volunteerism for Jewish organizations increases steadily with rising levels of education and income.
- ▶ Jews age 18-34 are the only age group and Jews in the West are the only regional group equally or more likely to volunteer for non-Jewish organizations only than for Jewish organizations; all other age and regional groups are more likely to volunteer for Jewish organizations than for non-Jewish organizations only.
- ▶ Married adults with children have higher levels of volunteering for Jewish organizations than other Jews.

- ▶ Levels of volunteerism for Jewish organizations are elevated among those who attend religious services often, are highly affiliated with Jewish institutions, make philanthropic contributions to Jewish causes, are in-married and have many close Jewish friends.
- ▶ Day school education when growing up is strongly associated with current volunteerism for Jewish organizations.
- ▶ As Jewish connections strengthen, volunteering for Jewish organizations becomes more and more likely relative to volunteering for non-Jewish organizations only.

The remainder of this report proceeds in five sections. The next section describes the data and measures, followed by a brief presentation of population estimates for volunteerism. Two sections then examine variations in volunteerism by demographic factors and Jewish connections, respectively. The report concludes with a discussion of the findings and strategic implications for the Jewish communal system.

DATA AND MEASURES

THE NJPS QUESTIONNAIRE was divided into long-form and short-form versions. The long-form version was administered to respondents whose responses to selected early questions indicated stronger Jewish connections; these respondents represent 4.3 million Jews, or over 80% of all U.S. Jews. The short-form version, which omitted many questions on Jewish topics, was given to respondents whose answers on the same selected early questions indicated Jewish connections that are not as strong; they represent an additional 800,000 Jews (see Methodological Note, p. 6). Because questions on volunteerism appeared on the long-form version, this report is restricted to adult respondents in the more Jewishly-connected population of 4.3 million people; these adults total 3.4 million people.¹

1. The more Jewishly-connected population contains approximately 900,000 children.

Within this more restricted sample, NJPS asked respondents whether they had performed any volunteer work, for any organization, in the year prior to being interviewed.² Those who said they had volunteered were asked follow-up questions to determine if they had volunteered for Jewish organizations³ and non-Jewish organizations.⁴ Respondents could, of course, reply that they had volunteered for both types of organizations.

Employing these questions, three specific measures of volunteerism were computed:

- ▶ Volunteerism for any organization, Jewish or non-Jewish (the reports refers to this as **general volunteerism**)
- ▶ Volunteerism for Jewish organizations (**Jewish volunteerism**)
- ▶ Volunteerism for non-Jewish organizations only (**non-Jewish volunteerism**)

These measures come with two caveats. First, the measure of Jewish volunteerism includes those who volunteered for Jewish organizations only **and** those who volunteered for both Jewish and non-Jewish organizations. In other words, it includes anyone who volunteered for a Jewish organization, even if he or she also volunteered for a non-Jewish organization (for further discussion of this issue, see the Appendix: Further Details on Jewish Volunteerism, p. 23). In contrast, the measure of non-Jewish volunteerism is restricted to those who volunteered solely for non-Jewish organizations; it excludes those who also volunteered for Jewish organizations. As a result, these two measures are mutually exclusive, and their sum is equal to the measure of general volunteerism.

Second, none of these measures of volunteerism distinguish the type of service that was provided or the duration of service. For example, they do

2. The question asked: “During the past year, have you done any volunteer work for any organization, whether Jewish or not Jewish? This includes fund raising and attending meetings.”

3. The question asked: “Have you done any volunteer work for, or sponsored by, a synagogue, Federation or other Jewish organization?”

4. The question asked: “Not counting any financial donations you may have given, during the past year have you done any volunteer work for any organization that is not Jewish?”

METHODOLOGICAL NOTE

The National Jewish Population Survey 2000-01 is a nationally representative survey of the Jewish population living in the U.S. The survey was administered to a random sample of approximately 4500 Jews. Interviewing for NJPS took place from August 21, 2000 to August 30, 2001 and was conducted by telephone. The sample of telephone numbers called was selected by a computer through a Random Digit Dialing (RDD) procedure, thus permitting access to both listed and unlisted numbers in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. The margin of error when the entire sample is used for analysis is +/- 2%. The margin of error for subsamples is larger.

The NJPS questionnaire included over 300 questions on a wide variety of topics, including household characteristics, demographic subjects, health and social service needs, economic characteristics, and Jewish background, behavior and attitudes.

The NJPS questionnaire was divided into long-form and short-form versions. The long-form version was administered to respondents whose responses to selected early questions indicated stronger Jewish connections; these respondents represent 4.3 million Jews, or over 80% of all U.S. Jews. The short-form version, which omitted many questions on Jewish topics and social services, was given to respondents whose answers on the same selected early questions indicated Jewish connections that are not as strong; they represent an additional 800,000 Jews.

The most important implication of this design decision is related to findings on Jewish connections. Descriptions of Jewish involvement and identity that are restricted to the more engaged part of the Jewish population (4.3 million Jews) would, in many cases, be somewhat less strong if they had been collected from all respondents representing the entire Jewish population.

In this report, all data are restricted to respondents representing the more Jewishly-engaged segment of the Jewish population (4.3 million Jews).

For further methodological information, see the Methodological Appendix in *The National Jewish Population Survey 2000-01: Strength, Challenge and Diversity in the American Jewish Population, A United Jewish Communities Report* (available at www.ujc.org/njps.)

not differentiate between direct-service volunteerism such as working in a food bank and governance-related volunteerism such as serving on an organizational committee, nor do they differentiate between those who volunteered once and those who volunteered consistently.

In addition to general, Jewish and non-Jewish volunteerism, a fourth measure was computed: the relative likelihood of Jewish vs. non-Jewish volunteerism. This measure is an index computed by dividing the rate of Jewish volunteerism by the rate of non-Jewish volunteerism. Scores on the index of greater than 1 mean Jewish volunteerism is *more* likely than non-Jewish volunteerism; scores less than 1 indicate Jewish volunteerism is *less* likely than non-Jewish volunteerism. For example, if the score is 3 for a particular demographic group, that means Jewish volunteerism is 3 times more likely than non-Jewish volunteerism among that group's members. If the score is .5, it means Jewish volunteerism is only half as likely as non-Jewish volunteerism.

POPULATION ESTIMATES

NJPS DATA ARE WEIGHTED TO PROVIDE ESTIMATES OF THE JEWISH POPULATION with specific characteristics. Table 1 presents weighted estimates and percentages for volunteerism among adult Jews. The survey projects that more than 1.4 million adult Jews, or 43% of adult Jews in the more Jewishly-connected population, volunteered for some organization in the year before their NJPS interview. More Jews volunteered for Jewish organizations (836,000, or 25%) than for non-Jewish organizations only (609,000, or 18%).⁵

VOLUNTEERISM AND DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS

THIS SECTION OF THE REPORT FOCUSES ON VARIATIONS IN VOLUNTEERISM by demographic factors. Table 2 presents data for the four volunteerism measures (discussed above) for groups defined by gender, age, region, education, income, employment status, occupation

5. See Appendix: Further Details on Jewish Volunteerism (p. 23), for additional weighted estimates among those who volunteered for Jewish organizations.

TABLE I.

Weighted estimates of volunteerism (adult Jews in the more strongly connected Jewish population).

| | Weighted estimate | Percentage |
|-------------------------|-------------------|------------|
| Total population | 3,336,000 | 100% |
| Volunteerism | | |
| General | 1,445,000 | 43% |
| Jewish | 836,000 | 25% |
| Non-Jewish | 609,000 | 18% |

among employed individuals, marital status and household composition.

To begin, percentages for general, Jewish and non-Jewish volunteerism are listed in the first row of the table (they repeat the percentages from Table 1), along with the index of relative likelihood of Jewish vs. non-Jewish volunteerism. For all Jews in the analysis, the index is 1.39, meaning Jews are nearly 1.4 times more likely to volunteer for Jewish organizations than for non-Jewish organizations only.

Examining the first demographic category, gender, the table shows just a slightly higher percentage of women than men volunteering in general and for Jewish organizations. The index of relative likelihood indicates that both women and men are more likely to volunteer for Jewish organizations than for non-Jewish organizations only, with just a minor difference in the index between them.

Greater variations appear in the volunteerism of different age groups. General and Jewish volunteerism reach their peaks in the 35-49 year-old age group, and then steadily decline with age. Non-Jewish volunteerism is highest among those in the youngest cohort – in other words, it does not rise among 35-49 year olds – and then it too declines with age. However, while age is associated with declining volunteerism, it is also associated with an increasing index of Jewish to non-Jewish volunteerism. At the extremes, the youngest adult Jews (age 18-34) are just slightly less likely to volunteer for Jewish organizations than for non-Jewish organizations only – they are the only age group to show this pattern – while the oldest

adults (age 75+) are more than twice as likely to volunteer for Jewish organizations than for non-Jewish organizations only.

Turning to the country’s four regions,⁶ the Midwest has the highest proportion of Jews who volunteer in general and for Jewish organizations, though in fact there is little regional variation in either measure. There is, however, greater regional variation in the likelihood of Jewish and non-Jewish volunteerism. Jews in the Northeast display the highest likelihood of volunteering for Jewish organizations relative to non-Jewish organizations only. In contrast, Jews in the West are the only regional group more likely to volunteer for non-Jewish organizations only than for Jewish organizations.

Education is strongly associated with overall rates of volunteerism. All forms of volunteerism – general, Jewish and non-Jewish – rise consistently as educational levels increase, ending with more than half of those with a graduate degree volunteering in general. However, education is not systematically associated with the relative likelihood of Jewish and non-Jewish volunteerism. Jews with a high school education or below have the highest index of relative likelihood, but the index then falls, rises and falls again with successive educational levels, demonstrating no clear pattern.

There is a direct association between income and volunteerism, similar to the one between education and income.⁷ In fact, general and Jewish volunteerism increase progressively with rising income, so that more than

6. The U.S. Census Bureau divides the country into four regions. Northeast = Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island and Vermont. Midwest = Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota and Wisconsin. South = Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, Washington, D.C. and West Virginia. West = Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington and Wyoming.

7. Because education and income are themselves highly correlated, it is not surprising they are related similarly to volunteerism. However, education and income do not always have the same association with third variables. Perhaps the best example of this is with political attitudes. Increasing levels of education tend to produce more liberal political attitudes, while increasing income tends to result in more conservative political stances.

TABLE 2.

Variations in volunteerism by demographic factors.

| VOLUNTEERISM | | | | |
|--------------------------|-------------|------------|----------------|---|
| | General (%) | Jewish (%) | Non-Jewish (%) | Index of relative likelihood of Jewish vs. non-Jewish |
| Total | 43 | 25 | 18 | 1.39 |
| Gender | | | | |
| Male | 41 | 23 | 18 | 1.28 |
| Female | 45 | 26 | 19 | 1.37 |
| Age | | | | |
| 18-34 | 45 | 22 | 23 | 0.96 |
| 35-49 | 49 | 29 | 20 | 1.45 |
| 50-64 | 44 | 26 | 18 | 1.44 |
| 65-74 | 39 | 23 | 16 | 1.44 |
| 75+ | 30 | 21 | 9 | 2.30 |
| Region | | | | |
| Northeast | 40 | 25 | 15 | 1.67 |
| Midwest | 48 | 28 | 20 | 1.40 |
| South | 43 | 25 | 18 | 1.39 |
| West | 45 | 22 | 23 | 0.96 |
| Education | | | | |
| High school or below | 31 | 19 | 12 | 1.58 |
| Some college | 39 | 22 | 17 | 1.29 |
| College degree | 48 | 28 | 20 | 1.40 |
| Graduate degree | 52 | 30 | 22 | 1.36 |
| Income | | | | |
| < \$25,000 | 24 | 15 | 9 | 1.67 |
| \$25-49,999 | 38 | 20 | 18 | 1.11 |
| \$50-99,999 | 45 | 24 | 21 | 1.14 |
| \$100-149,999 | 52 | 28 | 24 | 1.17 |
| \$150,000 + | 62 | 43 | 19 | 2.26 |
| Employment status | | | | |
| Employed full-time | 45 | 24 | 21 | 1.14 |
| Employed part-time | 53 | 32 | 21 | 1.52 |
| Retired | 37 | 25 | 12 | 2.08 |
| Homemaker | 48 | 38 | 10 | 3.80 |
| Student | 56 | 24 | 32 | 0.75 |
| Unemployed | 28 | 16 | 12 | 1.33 |
| Disabled/unable to work | 14 | 8 | 6 | 1.33 |

| VOLUNTEERISM | | | | |
|---|-------------|------------|----------------|---|
| | General (%) | Jewish (%) | Non-Jewish (%) | Index of relative likelihood of Jewish vs. non-Jewish |
| Total | 43 | 25 | 18 | 1.39 |
| Occupation (among employed) | | | | |
| Management/executive | 51 | 30 | 21 | 1.43 |
| Business/finance | 55 | 32 | 23 | 1.39 |
| Professional/technical | 51 | 27 | 24 | 1.13 |
| Service/sales/administrative support | 40 | 20 | 20 | 1.00 |
| Foremen/skilled and unskilled workers | 28 | 19 | 8 | 2.38 |
| All others | 47 | 28 | 19 | 1.47 |
| Marital status | | | | |
| Married | 44 | 29 | 15 | 1.93 |
| Divorced/separated | 45 | 21 | 24 | 0.88 |
| Widowed | 27 | 17 | 10 | 1.70 |
| Single/never married | 44 | 18 | 26 | 0.69 |
| Household composition | | | | |
| Non-elderly single, no children | 41 | 18 | 23 | 0.78 |
| Non-married partners, no children | 44 | 14 | 30 | 0.47 |
| Non-elderly married couple, no children | 44 | 26 | 18 | 1.44 |
| Single parent, children 0-17 | 50 | 22 | 28 | 0.79 |
| Married couple, children 0-17 | 51 | 36 | 15 | 2.40 |
| Adult(s) and adult children (no minor children) | 44 | 26 | 18 | 1.44 |
| Elderly married couple, no children | 36 | 24 | 12 | 2.00 |
| Elderly single, no children | 30 | 19 | 11 | 1.73 |
| All others | 42 | 17 | 25 | 0.68 |

60% of Jews living in households with income of \$150,000 or more volunteer generally and 43% volunteer for Jewish organizations. Rates of non-Jewish volunteerism also rise steadily through the income category of \$100-\$149,999, but then drop off at the very highest income level. While people at all levels of income are more likely to volunteer for Jewish organizations than for non-Jewish organizations only, the index of relative likelihood shows an interesting “U-shaped” pattern. Jews with the lowest and highest incomes are significantly more likely to volunteer for Jewish organizations than for non-Jewish organizations only, while those in the middle of the income distribution are only slightly more likely to favor Jewish over non-Jewish volunteerism.

The association of employment status and volunteerism is fairly complex. Above-average rates of general volunteerism characterize those who are employed full-time and part-time, homemakers and students. Of those groups, though, only part-time employees and homemakers have higher-than-average rates of Jewish volunteerism and higher-than-average indices of the relative likelihood of Jewish and non-Jewish volunteerism. Full-time employees and students volunteer for Jewish organizations at just below the overall average for Jews, but both have lower-than-average indices of the relative likelihood of Jewish and non-Jewish volunteerism. In fact, students are more likely to volunteer for non-Jewish organizations only than to volunteer for Jewish organizations, a pattern that reflects students’ generally younger age. Those who are retired, meanwhile, display relatively low levels of general volunteerism, but they are twice as likely to volunteer for Jewish organizations than for non-Jewish organizations only. Finally, being unemployed or having disabilities that prevent working produce below-average levels of all types of volunteerism, though for both groups the relative likelihood of Jewish and non-Jewish volunteerism is near the overall average for Jews.

The association between occupation and volunteerism is similar to that of education and volunteerism: systematic in some respects but not in others. People in higher status occupations (management/executive, business/finance, and professional/technical) report higher levels of

volunteerism – general, Jewish and non-Jewish – than people in middle and lower status occupations (service, sales, administrative support, foremen, and skilled and unskilled workers). However, the index of relative likelihood shows no consistent pattern across occupational categories. The lowest values on the index are found among some of those with high status occupations (professional/technical) and those with mid-level status (service, sales and administrative support). The other high status occupations (management/executive and business/finance) have average-level indices, while foremen, skilled and unskilled workers have the highest index scores.⁸

Turning to marital status, there is little variation in general volunteerism among those who are married, divorced/separated, and single/never married, while those who are widowed show a steep decline (this is consistent with the decrease in volunteerism among older people). Married people have both the highest levels of Jewish volunteerism and the highest index of relative likelihood of Jewish vs. non-Jewish volunteerism. Widows and widowers have the lowest levels of Jewish volunteerism, but they are still 1.7 times more likely to volunteer for Jewish organizations than non-Jewish organizations only. In contrast, those who are divorced/separated and single/never married are more likely to volunteer under non-Jewish auspices only than under Jewish ones.

The final demographic category, household composition, indicates that parents with children in their household have the highest rates of general volunteerism, but the relative balance of Jewish and non-Jewish volunteerism varies significantly between married and single parents. Married adults with children in the household have both the highest level of Jewish volunteerism and the highest index of relative likelihood of Jewish vs. non-Jewish volunteerism. In contrast, single parents have rates of Jewish volunteerism that are below the overall average for Jews, and they are more likely to volunteer for non-Jewish organizations only than for Jewish organizations.

8. The elevated index of relative likelihood for foremen, skilled and unskilled workers is consistent with elevated indices for those with a high school education or below.

Other households reveal interesting contrasts as well. Non-elderly singles with no children, non-married partners with no children, and non-elderly marrieds with no children do not vary much in terms of general volunteerism, but those who are married are more likely to volunteer for Jewish organizations than for non-Jewish organizations only, while the opposite is the case for those who are not married. This suggests that marriage plays a role in tipping the balance of volunteerism toward Jewish rather than non-Jewish organizations only, even when there are no children in the household. Lastly, the elderly – both those living with their spouse and those living alone – have diminished levels of all types of volunteerism, but their index of relative likelihood indicates they are more likely to undertake Jewish than non-Jewish only volunteerism. These findings are consistent with those on age, being retired and widowhood.

VOLUNTEERISM AND JEWISH CONNECTIONS

THIS SECTION OF THE REPORT FOCUSES ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN JEWISH CONNECTIONS AND VOLUNTEERISM. Table 3 provides rates of volunteerism, and the index of relative likelihood of Jewish and non-Jewish volunteerism, for categories of Jewish denominational identification, religious service attendance, Jewish education, organizational affiliations, philanthropic giving, and Jewish social networks (in-marriage/intermarriage and Jewish friends).

Turning first to Jewish denominational identification, the table shows that general volunteerism is more common among people who identify with one of the four institutionalized denominations – Orthodox, Conservative, Reform and Reconstructionist⁹ – than among those who identify as “just Jewish,” have no denomination or are secular.¹⁰ Jewish and non-Jewish volunteerism vary even more and display nearly converse patterns. Jewish volunteerism ranges from close to half among Orthodox Jews to less than 10% among those who are “just Jewish” or classified as “no denomination/secular,” while non-Jewish volunteerism ranges from nearly

9. Findings for Reconstructionist Jews should be interpreted cautiously due to small sample size.

one-third among those who are “no denomination/secular” to under 5% among Orthodox Jews. As a result, the index of relative likelihood of Jewish and non-Jewish volunteerism varies substantially as well. Orthodox Jews are twelve times more likely to volunteer for Jewish organizations than for non-Jewish organizations only, while those who identify as “just Jewish” and those classified as “no denomination/secular” are much more likely to engage in non-Jewish than Jewish volunteerism.

Differences in volunteerism by religious service attendance are equally dramatic. General and Jewish volunteerism increase, and non-Jewish volunteerism decreases, in moving from no religious service attendance to attendance once a month or more. Consequently, those who attend religious services most often are almost 7 times more likely to volunteer for Jewish organizations than for non-Jewish organizations only, while those who do not attend religious services are only one-sixth as likely to engage in Jewish rather than non-Jewish volunteerism.

A strong association exists between Jewish education received when growing up and volunteerism. The more intensive the type of Jewish education received, the higher are the rates of general and Jewish volunteerism. Among people who attended Jewish day school or yeshiva, levels of general and Jewish volunteerism are 56% and 45%, respectively, while among those who had no Jewish education, the rates are just 28% and 13%. Non-Jewish volunteerism does not follow a linear pattern with Jewish education; the highest level of non-Jewish volunteerism occurs among those who attended a 1-day per week program, with decreasing levels among those with both more and less intensive forms of Jewish education. Those who attended day school/yeshiva have the highest index of relative likelihood of Jewish vs. non-

10. NJPS asked respondents: “Thinking about Jewish religious denominations, do you consider yourself to be Conservative, Orthodox, Reform, Reconstructionist, just Jewish, or something else?” The first five categories are reported above. Respondents who answered “something else” were asked a follow-up question to obtain a more detailed answer. “No denomination/secular” is an aggregate category comprised of these follow-up responses: no Jewish denomination, secular, ethnically Jewish, culturally Jewish, non-practicing Jew, Jewish by background/birth/heritage, agnostic, atheist, and no religion. A small proportion of respondents, less than 2%, provided other responses such as Sephardic, Humanist, and traditional, but they are not reported here because they do not comprise a coherent analytic category and their sample size is small.

TABLE 3.

Variations in volunteerism by Jewish connections.

| | VOLUNTEERISM | | | |
|--|--------------|------------|----------------|---|
| | General (%) | Jewish (%) | Non-Jewish (%) | Index of relative likelihood of Jewish vs. non-Jewish |
| Total | 43 | 25 | 18 | 1.39 |
| Denominational identification | | | | |
| Orthodox | 52 | 48 | 4 | 12.00 |
| Conservative | 47 | 33 | 14 | 2.36 |
| Reform | 47 | 25 | 22 | 1.14 |
| Reconstructionist | 52 | 30 | 22 | 1.37 |
| Just Jewish | 30 | 8 | 22 | 0.36 |
| No denomination/secular | 40 | 8 | 32 | 0.25 |
| Religious service attendance | | | | |
| 1/month or more | 61 | 53 | 8 | 6.63 |
| Less than 1/month | 42 | 21 | 21 | 1.00 |
| None | 27 | 4 | 23 | 0.17 |
| Jewish education | | | | |
| Day school/yeshiva | 56 | 45 | 11 | 4.09 |
| 2+ /week program | 48 | 28 | 20 | 1.40 |
| 1/week program | 45 | 22 | 23 | 0.96 |
| Other | 33 | 18 | 15 | 1.20 |
| None | 28 | 13 | 15 | 0.87 |
| Jewish affiliations (synagogue, JCC, other) | | | | |
| Two or more | 61 | 52 | 9 | 5.78 |
| One | 44 | 27 | 17 | 1.59 |
| None | 31 | 6 | 25 | 0.24 |
| Federation donation | | | | |
| Yes | 56 | 44 | 12 | 3.67 |
| No | 38 | 17 | 21 | 0.81 |
| Other Jewish cause donation | | | | |
| Yes | 56 | 42 | 14 | 3.00 |
| No | 31 | 9 | 23 | 0.39 |

| | VOLUNTEERISM | | | |
|---|--------------|------------|----------------|---|
| | General (%) | Jewish (%) | Non-Jewish (%) | Index of relative likelihood of Jewish vs. non-Jewish |
| Total | 43 | 25 | 18 | 1.39 |
| In-marriage and Inter-marriage | | | | |
| In-married - 2 born Jews | 46 | 34 | 12 | 2.83 |
| In-married - conversionary | 52 | 33 | 19 | 1.74 |
| Inter-married | 38 | 12 | 26 | 0.46 |
| Proportion of Closest Friends Jewish | | | | |
| All | 50 | 46 | 4 | 11.50 |
| Most | 45 | 34 | 11 | 3.09 |
| About half | 46 | 27 | 19 | 1.42 |
| Some | 41 | 14 | 27 | 0.52 |
| None | 28 | 3 | 25 | 0.12 |

Jewish volunteerism, while people who attended a Jewish education program two times or more a week and those who attended another type of program (e.g., private tutoring) are still more likely to volunteer under Jewish than non-Jewish auspices only. In contrast, those who attended a 1-day per week program and those who received no Jewish education are slightly more likely to volunteer for non-Jewish organizations only than for Jewish organizations.

In separate questions, NJPS asked respondents whether they belong to a synagogue, a Jewish Community Center or any other Jewish organization, and the measure of affiliation presented here divides the population into those who belong to no, one, or two or more Jewish organizations. Volunteerism shows a very similar association with Jewish organizational affiliations as it does with religious service attendance: general and Jewish

volunteerism steadily increase and non-Jewish volunteerism steadily decreases as Jewish affiliations rise. The index of relative likelihood of Jewish and non-Jewish volunteerism also rises as people are affiliated with increasing numbers of Jewish organizations. People with two or more affiliations are almost 6 times more likely to volunteer under Jewish auspices than under non-Jewish auspices only, while people with no affiliations are just one-quarter as likely to engage in Jewish rather than non-Jewish volunteerism. The strong relationship between affiliations and volunteerism, especially Jewish volunteerism, reflects the fact that organizations often provide information about and opportunities for volunteerism.

Philanthropic giving and volunteerism are often viewed as complementary components of the same underlying behavior, namely the effort to help sustain and nourish community and communal services. Variations in volunteerism are examined by two categories of philanthropic behavior: giving to Federation and giving to another Jewish cause. People who donate to Federation and other Jewish causes have higher levels of general and Jewish volunteerism, but lower levels of non-Jewish volunteerism, than people who do not. As a result, those who donate to Federation and those who donate to other Jewish causes are at least 3 times as likely to engage in Jewish volunteerism than in non-Jewish volunteerism, while those who do not donate are more likely to volunteer for non-Jewish organizations only than for Jewish organizations.

Moving away from Jewish institutional connections, we examine volunteerism and two measures of Jewish social networks, in-marriage/intermarriage and friendships with other Jews. In-married Jews – forming a marriage of two born Jewish spouses or a conversionary marriage in which one or in rare cases both spouses converted to Judaism – have higher levels of general and Jewish volunteerism and lower levels of non-Jewish volunteerism than intermarried Jews. Interestingly, the two groups of in-married Jews have nearly identical levels of Jewish volunteerism (34% and 33% respectively), but conversionary in-marrieds have higher rates of non-Jewish volunteerism. As a result, in-married Jews

in a marriage of two born Jews have a higher index of relative likelihood of Jewish vs. non-Jewish volunteerism than conversionary in-married Jews. In sharp contrast, intermarried Jews are more likely to volunteer for non-Jewish organizations only than for Jewish organizations.

Lastly, Jewish friendship networks are strongly associated with volunteerism, especially Jewish volunteerism. As the proportion of closest friends who are Jewish increases, Jewish volunteerism rises sharply. Indeed, Jewish volunteerism increases from just 3% among those who say that none of their closest friends are Jewish to 46% among those who say all of their closest friends are Jewish. The index of relative likelihood of Jewish and non-Jewish volunteerism shows a similar dramatic rise. The strong association between Jewish friends and Jewish volunteerism reflects the fact that people often recruit their friends to participate in voluntary activities. The association between Jewish friends and both general and non-Jewish volunteerism is not quite linear, but the overall pattern is for general volunteerism to increase and non-Jewish volunteerism to decrease as Jewish friendship networks strengthen.

CONCLUSIONS

This report has provided a basic analysis of how volunteerism differs among various segments of the Jewish population. The analysis shows that the four measures of volunteerism vary moderately, and in selected cases more strongly, by many demographic factors. Age, education and income, employment status and occupation, marital status, and household composition are all associated with different levels of general, Jewish and non-Jewish volunteerism, and with the relative likelihood that volunteerism is performed for Jewish organizations or for non-Jewish organizations only. Jewish connections are even more strongly associated with volunteerism, especially with Jewish volunteerism and the relative likelihood of Jewish vs. non-Jewish volunteerism.

What are the major implications for Federations and other communal agencies that are interested in increasing levels of volunteerism,

particularly Jewish volunteerism, among American Jews? Like so much in Jewish communal life, the question is situated in a larger strategic context of in-reach and outreach, of resource deployment and communal diversity. Put simply, the question about implications can be rephrased to ask: whom should communal organizations, Federations included, attempt to mobilize for volunteerism, and what are the potential consequences of mobilizing different types of people?

An in-reach strategy to increase levels of volunteerism would focus on those people whose characteristics indicate they will be easiest to mobilize. Demographically, that means concentrating on people between the ages of 35 and 64; those with high levels of education and income; married people, especially those with children; those whose employment status gives them some free or flexible time (but not students); and among those who are employed, people with higher status occupations. From the perspective of Jewish connections, it means concentrating on those who already have strong ties to Jewish life and Jewish community: people with more intensive Jewish educational backgrounds and multiple current affiliations; people who identify with one of the institutionalized denominations, attend religious services often, and have strong Jewish social networks; and importantly, people who give to Jewish philanthropic causes. This last connection deserves to be highlighted: while Jewish organizations want to increase volunteerism generally, they have a specific need to recruit volunteer leaders who have the capacity to contribute to the system's financial development.

Assuming the necessary resources are devoted to it, an in-reach strategy is likely to yield additional volunteers and strengthen Jewish communal organizations from both service and financial resource perspectives. At the same time, it is unlikely to add to the diversity of types of people – demographically and Jewishly – who already volunteer for the Jewish community. For some Jewish leaders, increasing the diversity of Jews who are connected to Jewish organizations – through formal memberships, volunteerism, or other forms of participation – is an important communal

goal because it highlights the variety of interests, perspectives, and thinking that characterize the Jewish population and to which organizations should be responsive, and because it brings new ideas, energy and vitality to organizations and the communal system.

An outreach strategy would take the opposite tack, focusing on bringing to the volunteerism enterprise those who have characteristics typically not associated with volunteerism, or associated but at reduced levels. Demographically, outreach would concentrate on younger and older Jews, those with lower levels of education and income, people who are not married, including single parents, and those with middle and lower status jobs.¹¹ Outreach would also emphasize efforts to attract people who do not already have strong Jewish connections, that is, those who had little Jewish education growing up, attend Jewish religious services infrequently or not at all, are not members of Jewish organizations, do not give to Jewish philanthropic causes, and have weaker Jewish social networks.

An outreach strategy is likely to be more difficult than an in-reach strategy, especially from the perspective of Jewish connections because the organizational and social network ties that are key mechanisms for mobilizing volunteers are absent or weak. It may also not be as productive in terms of identifying untapped sources of financial support for the communal system. On the other hand, a successful outreach strategy would not only strengthen the Jewish community and its organizations in terms of sheer numbers of volunteers; it would also serve as a communal entrance point for previously uninvolved or under-involved Jews and enhance the diversity of Jews who are actively engaged in the communal system.

Strategic decisions about volunteerism may vary by two important factors. First, pursuing an in-reach or outreach strategy may depend on the type of volunteers an organization needs and the functions it needs them to fulfill. For example, efforts to enhance governance-related volunteerism may lend

11. Older Jews, those with lower levels of education and income, and those with lower-status jobs may be particularly responsive to an outreach strategy. Though their overall levels of Jewish volunteerism are low, when they do volunteer, it is more often for Jewish organizations than for non-Jewish organizations only.

themselves to an in-reach strategy that seeks to mobilize people – and members of their families, including in some cases their adult children – who are already familiar with the organized communal system, or who have the financial resources that could be tapped for the system’s continued development. In contrast, an outreach strategy may be more applicable to direct-service volunteerism, such as providing assistance to the elderly, which does not require previous communal experience and, in fact, may serve as a gateway to further communal participation and the acquisition of greater knowledge about the communal system.

Second, the ability of communal organizations to recruit and engage new volunteers depends on numerous existing factors. Professional staff, already-committed volunteers, time and financial resources are necessary to implement any strategy to increase levels of communal volunteerism. Organizations rich in these resources may be able to pursue in-reach and outreach strategies simultaneously, if organizational needs call for them. Organizations with more limited initial resources may have to pursue one strategy rather than both, or to use one strategy as a building block upon which to pursue the other at a later time.

Lastly, it bears returning to and emphasizing the idea with which this report began. Communal efforts to enhance volunteerism – beyond the specific strategic decisions and plans undertaken after careful assessment of organizational needs, and beyond how expansive or limited the effort is depending on existing resources – reflect in contemporary times the long-standing centrality of *gmilut chasadim* in the Jewish tradition, and it is within that context that they find their ultimate value.

APPENDIX: FURTHER DETAILS ON JEWISH VOLUNTEERISM

IN THIS REPORT, Jews who reported that they volunteered for Jewish organizations were grouped together in one category (Jewish volunteerism), without regard to whether they had also volunteered for non-Jewish organizations. This analytic strategy was taken because for most communal purposes, the distinction between those who volunteer for Jewish organizations only and those who volunteer for both Jewish and non-Jewish organizations is unlikely to be significant. The aim of the communal system is to increase the number of Jews volunteering for Jewish organizations, regardless of whether they volunteer for non-Jewish organizations or not.

However, combining all respondents who engaged in Jewish volunteerism into one group masks some interesting analytic findings. To begin, Table A-1 provides weighted estimates and percentages for volunteerism under a new categorization that distinguishes between 1) those who volunteered for Jewish organizations only and 2) those who volunteered for both Jewish and non-Jewish organizations, and then compares them against those who volunteered for non-Jewish organizations only.

The table indicates, as previously noted, that 43% of adult Jews volunteered in the year before their NJPS interview. The table also reveals that 9% volunteered for Jewish organizations only, 16% for both Jewish

TABLE A-1.

Weighted estimates of volunteerism (adult Jews in the more strongly connected Jewish population).

| | Weighted estimate | Percentage |
|-------------------------|-------------------|------------|
| Total population | 3,336,000 | 100% |
| Volunteerism | | |
| General | 1,445,000 | 43% |
| Jewish only | 312,000 | 9% |
| Jewish and non-Jewish | 524,000 | 16% |
| Non-Jewish only | 609,000 | 18% |

and non-Jewish organizations, and (also as previously noted) 18% for non-Jewish organizations only. When analyzed this way, the data show that more Jews volunteered for non-Jewish organizations (16% + 18% = 34%) than for Jewish organizations (9% + 16% = 25%), even as more Jews volunteered for Jewish organizations (25%) than for non-Jewish organizations only (18%).

When “Jewish only” and “Jewish and non-Jewish” volunteerism are separated from each other, some analytic differences arise in their associations with measures of demographic characteristics and Jewish connections. In general, the distinctive relationships between Jewish volunteerism, as defined in the report, and many of the demographic variables are due more to “Jewish and non-Jewish” volunteerism than to “Jewish only” volunteerism. For example, education has a strong linear association with “Jewish and non-Jewish” volunteerism, but has a weak (i.e., flat) association with “Jewish only” volunteerism (see Table A-2). Income retains a linear relationship with “Jewish only” and “Jewish and non-Jewish” volunteerism, but has a stronger relationship with the latter. Age shows a distinctive U-shaped relationship with “Jewish and non-Jewish” volunteerism rather than with “Jewish only” volunteerism.

Jewish connections, in turn, tend to have stronger and more consistent relationships to volunteerism for Jewish organizations only than to volunteerism for both Jewish and non-Jewish organizations (see Table A-2). For example, as the proportion of Jewish friends increase, “Jewish only” volunteerism increases consistently and sharply. “Jewish and non-Jewish” volunteerism also increases, though somewhat less sharply, and then falls again at the highest levels of the Jewish friendship measure. The measure of affiliations remains linearly associated with both forms of volunteerism, but across the affiliation scale, the incline for “Jewish only” volunteerism (10-fold) is steeper than for “Jewish and non-Jewish” volunteerism (8-fold).

Further information on the analytic differences between “Jewish only” and “Jewish and non-Jewish” volunteerism can be obtained from the UJC Research Department.

TABLE A-2.

Selected variations in volunteerism: Jewish only, and Jewish and non-Jewish.

| | Jewish only (%) | Jewish & non-Jewish (%) |
|--|--------------------|----------------------------|
| Total | 9 | 16 |
| Education | | |
| High school or below | 10 | 8 |
| Some college | 9 | 13 |
| College degree | 10 | 17 |
| Graduate degree | 8 | 21 |
| Income | | |
| < \$25,000 | 8 | 7 |
| \$25-49,999 | 9 | 11 |
| \$50-99,999 | 8 | 16 |
| \$100-149,999 | 11 | 17 |
| \$150,000 + | 14 | 30 |
| Age | | |
| 18-34 | 10 | 12 |
| 35-49 | 9 | 20 |
| 50-64 | 8 | 19 |
| 65-74 | 12 | 11 |
| 75+ | 9 | 12 |
| Proportion of Closest Friends Jewish | | |
| All | 33 | 13 |
| Most | 13 | 21 |
| About half | 6 | 22 |
| Some | 3 | 11 |
| None | 1 | 2 |
| Jewish affiliations (synagogue, JCC, other) | | |
| Two or more | 20 | 32 |
| One | 10 | 17 |
| None | 2 | 4 |



111 Eighth Avenue, Suite 11E, New York, NY 10011

www.ujc.org/njps