

ISRAELI JEWS IN GREATER NEW YORK

Their Numbers, Characteristics,
and Patterns of Jewish Engagement

A UJA-FEDERATION OF NEW YORK REPORT

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Introduction

To many observers of Jewish communal life in New York and North America, two observations seem fairly commonplace and widely accepted:

- 1) There is a large, although not precisely known, number of Israeli-origin Jews in the New York area and in North America more generally.
- 2) In large measure, they are detached from Jewish life. In fact, they are so detached that they — or their children — are at unusual risk of pursuing paths that keep them or lead them outside of the Jewish community, Judaism, and Jewish engagement.

Accordingly, UJA-Federation of New York and several of its beneficiary agencies have long supported programs designed to engage Israelis in Jewish community life in one way or another. That said, these efforts have taken on different forms and objectives in different times and places. UJA-Federation has recently turned its attention to the Israeli population segment with a view toward developing new thinking about basic assumptions, policies, and programs. To support that effort, UJA-Federation's Commission on the Jewish People commissioned this study of the available evidence pertaining to Israeli-origin Jews in UJA-Federation's eight-county service area, which includes the five boroughs, Westchester, and Long Island.

To date, no systematic effort has been undertaken to comprehend the Israeli population in the New York area. This study, then, aims to provide fundamental and policy-relevant information on this important, poorly understood population segment. In particular, we formulated and chose to address three central research questions:

1. How many Israeli Jews are there in New York? How may we arrive at different estimates based on varying definitions of this population?
2. What is their socio-demographic profile? How are they distributed by age, gender, location, marital status, household size, education, income, language

pattern, citizenship status, and other factors? How do Israelis compare with their “American” counterparts?

3. What do we know about their levels of Jewish engagement, and to what extent are they engaged in various aspects of Jewish life? Included here are denominational identity, friends and spouses, ritual observance, communal affiliation, attachment to Israel, subjective Jewish identity, and related issues. How do Israelis compare with “Americans,” and how do non-Orthodox Israelis compare with their American counterparts?

Methods

Sources of Information on Israelis in the New York Area

This study relies upon the “secondary analysis” of previously collected data. To address the questions articulated above, we undertook the following procedures:

- We reviewed the scholarly literature on Israelis in the United States (little of relevance applies directly to Israelis in New York).
- We analyzed the *Jewish Community Study of New York: 2002* (JCSNY), sponsored by UJA-Federation of New York.
- We analyzed the *National Jewish Population Survey 2000–2001* (NJPS).
- We analyzed five years of the annual National United States Census American Community Studies from 2003 to 2007, extracting Israeli-born adult respondents.

Data Sets – A Brief Description

The highlights of the three data sets we analyzed appear below.

Table 1: Data Sets Analyzed

Feature	Jewish Community Study of New York (JCSNY)	National Jewish Population Survey (NJPS)	American Community Studies (Census)
Years conducted	2002	2000–01	2003–07
Sponsor	UJA-Federation of New York	United Jewish Communities	United States Census Bureau
Major publication or website for additional details	Ukeles Associates (2002)	Kotler-Berkowitz, et al. (2003)	
Definition of Israeli	Born in Israel <i>or</i> Not born in U.S. or Canada <i>and</i> lived in Israel <i>or</i> last resided in Israel	Born in Israel	Born in Israel
Number of Israeli respondents (unweighted)	1. 165 2. 190	98	3599
Number of non-Israeli Jewish respondents (unweighted)	1. 4368 2. 4343	4523	Not relevant

Findings

Population Estimates

In Greater New York: From 31,000 to 81,000 Israelis, Depending on Definition

Any estimate of the number of Israelis living in the New York area depends on how one defines an Israeli person. Based on the narrowest definition — a Jewish adult born in Israel — we estimate that there are 31,000 Israelis living in the region (the Jewish Community Study of New York [JCSNY] yields an estimate of 31,000, while the United States Census suggests 28,000). We also calculated the number based on a broader definition: beyond those born in Israel, we included Jews born outside of Israel or North America who met either of two conditions: they lived in Israel or they last resided in Israel. With this broader definition, we estimate 41,000 Israeli adults, or an increase of 10,000 over the number born in Israel.

If we include all Jews in households with an Israeli adult, including children and non-Israelis, then by the narrow definition of Israeli (born in Israel), we estimate 74,300 people live in Israeli households. Using the expanded definition (Jewish, Israeli-born plus those formerly living in Israel), we arrive at about 81,000 individuals. Thus, with respect to the narrow definition of Israeli (born in Israel), we find that the Census and the JCSNY provide very similar estimates for the number of Israeli adults in the region: 28,000 according to the Census, and 31,000 according to the JCSNY.

These figures certainly point to an Israeli population in New York — and, by extension, the country — that is smaller than widely believed. A variety of public and communal leaders and agencies have estimated the Israeli population in the United States as significantly exceeding half a million individuals. Given the estimated size of the Jewish population of the United States, such an estimate translates into about 10 percent of the United States Jewish population. Whatever their fraction of the United States Jewish population, given the concentration of Israelis in New York, we would anticipate an even higher fraction of the New York Jewish population.

In contrast with estimates advanced by advocacy groups, almost all scholarly estimates place the total number of Israelis residing in the U.S. at 100,000 or fewer (see NJPS Methodological Series: Israelis in the United States, <http://www.ujc.org/page.aspx?id=46358>). For example, Steven Gold and Bruce Phillips analyzed the 1990 NJPS and estimated that the Israeli-born population in the United States at that time was 90,000. Two Israeli sociologists at Tel Aviv University, Yinon Cohen and Yitchak Haberfeld, used the 1990 United States Census to estimate the number of Israeli-born Jews living in the U.S. at that time to be 80,000. The NJPS 2000–2001 estimates that there are approximately 63,000 Israelis living in the U.S. Although the NJPS figure is likely a low estimate, it does point to far fewer Israeli Jews in the United States than the conventional wisdom suggests. Why advocacy groups tend to offer inflated estimates remains a matter of speculation; what is not speculative is that many studies and surveys points to about 100,000 Israeli-born Jews in the U.S., with approximately 30,000 such Jews in the New York area.

Methodological Explanation

A bit of elaboration of our methods is in order. Our analysis of the United States Census's American Community Studies from 2003 to 2007 estimates the number of Israeli-born Jews living in the United States at approximately 99,600. Of those, the Census data indicate that 30 percent, or 29,750, live in New York State. The Census does not provide more detailed information by geography, such as downstate New York, which more closely corresponds to UJA-Federation of New York's service area. Accordingly, consistent with the geographic distribution of Jews in New York State (ascertained through a number of local population studies), we reduced the 30 percent in New York State to arrive at the percentage of the U.S. total living in UJA-Federation's eight-county service area. Thus, we estimated that according to the United States Census, Israelis living in UJA-Federation's service area amount to approximately 28 percent of the national total, or about 28,000 adults who are Jewish and were born in Israel. (To be precise, the Census records individuals as having been born in "Israel/Palestine"; from this number, we removed those who speak Arabic in the home or report ancestry in Arab

countries where few Jews have historically lived. Thus, those who reported ancestry in Jordan or Saudi Arabia were dropped, while those from Iraq were retained.)

As noted above, we also went beyond Israeli individual adults to include Jewish family members, such as spouses who are not themselves Israelis and children, most of who were not born in Israel. By going beyond adults to embrace all family members, we arrive at 74,300 individuals living in homes with an Israeli-born adult and 81,000 for those living in homes with an adult who lived in Israel for a year or more but was not born in the U.S. or Canada. See the table below for all four estimates.

Table 2: Population Estimates in the Eight-County New York Area

	Jewish Israeli-born adults	Jews in households with at least one Israeli-born adult
Israeli-born only	31,000 (28,000)*	74,300
Expanded definition**	41,000	81,000

*The population estimate in parenthesis is based on the United States Census data.

**Expanded definition of Israelis:

1. Any Jewish adult member of the household who was born in Israel *or*
2. Any Jewish adult household member who said the location of their previous primary residence was Israel but is not American- or Canadian-born *or*
3. Any Jewish adult household member who said they lived in Israel but is not American- or Canadian-born.

Demographic Characteristics

Critical to any policy formulation is an understanding of the basic demographic characteristics of the population segment in question. For this section, we chose to rely on the United States Census for national and New York State characteristics and the Jewish Community Study of New York for New York–area characteristics as well.¹ Drawing on these three data sources, we constructed a portrait of Israelis in greater New York, focusing on households in which either the respondent or his or her spouse was an Israeli-born adult.² Where the three data sets provided multiple estimates of the distribution of characteristics, we found the distributions largely concurred.

Region

Almost one-third of U.S. Israelis live in greater New York: According to the United States Census, there are about 99,600 Israeli-born adults living in the U.S. Of those, about 30,000, or 30 percent, live in New York State.

On a U.S. regional basis, the majority of Israelis live in the northeast (45 percent), followed by the west (28 percent), reflecting the concentrations of Israelis in the New York and Los Angeles areas, respectively. These two regions are followed by south Florida.

¹The United States Census population estimates are based on the number of Israeli-born adults living in New York State; the vast majority live in the New York metropolitan area. This metropolitan area includes northeastern New Jersey, but the numerical impact of including this geographic area is very small.

²Percentages from the Jewish Community Study of New York found throughout the rest of this report include only Jewish respondents and their spouses who indicated they were born in Israel and now reside in the eight-county New York area.

Figure 1: Israeli-Born Jews by Census Regions

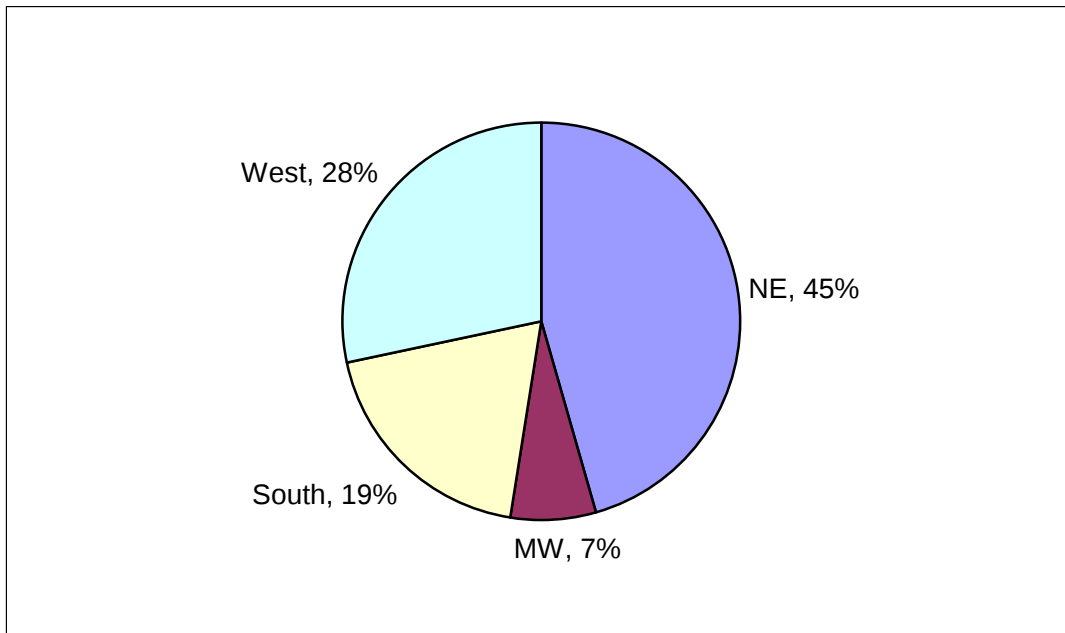


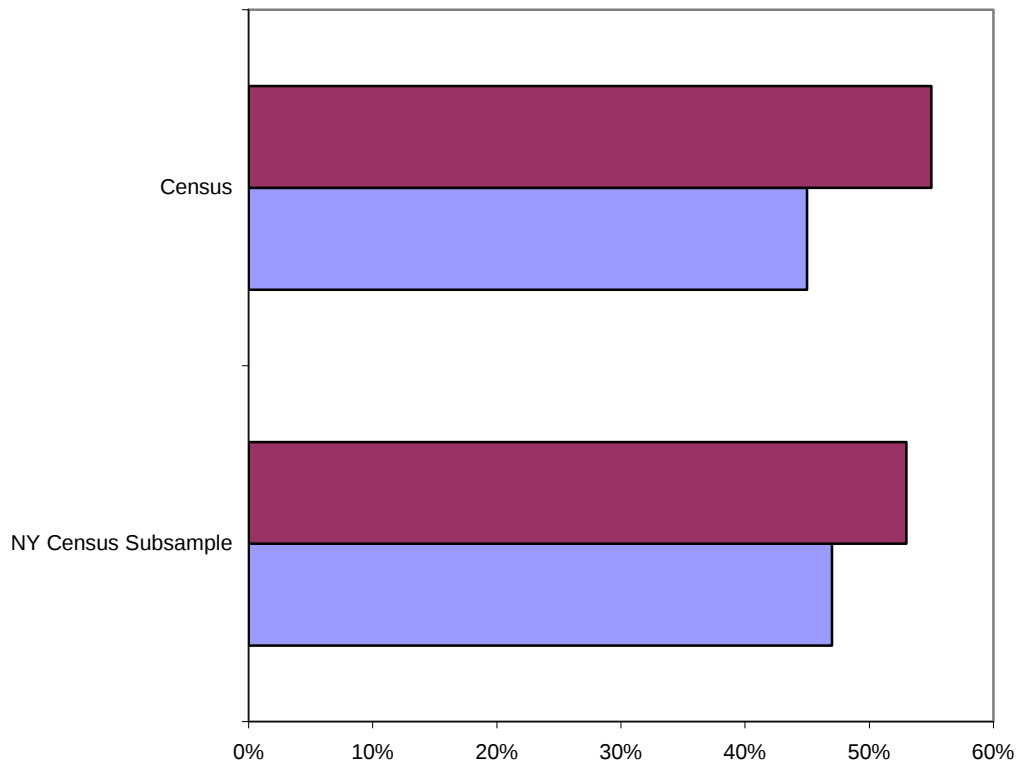
Table 3: Regional Breakdown

	Israel-born in the U.S. as a percentage	Population estimate
Population		99,572
Census regions		
Northeast	45	44,807
Midwest	7	6,970
South	19	18,919
West	28	27,880
Percentage in New York State	30	29,872
Percentage in New York-Northeast New Jersey metropolitan area (general)	28	27,880
Detailed Percentage in New York-Northeast New Jersey metropolitan area		
New York-Northeast New Jersey	22	21,906
Nassau County, New York	3	2,987
Northern New Jersey	4	3,983
Percentage of New York City	25	24,893

Gender

More men than women: According to the United States Census, there are more Israeli-born men (55 percent) than women (45 percent). Historically, immigrant groups report higher numbers of men than women and, apparently, Israelis are no exception to this general tendency.

Figure 2: Gender Breakdown of Israeli-Born Jews in the United States Census



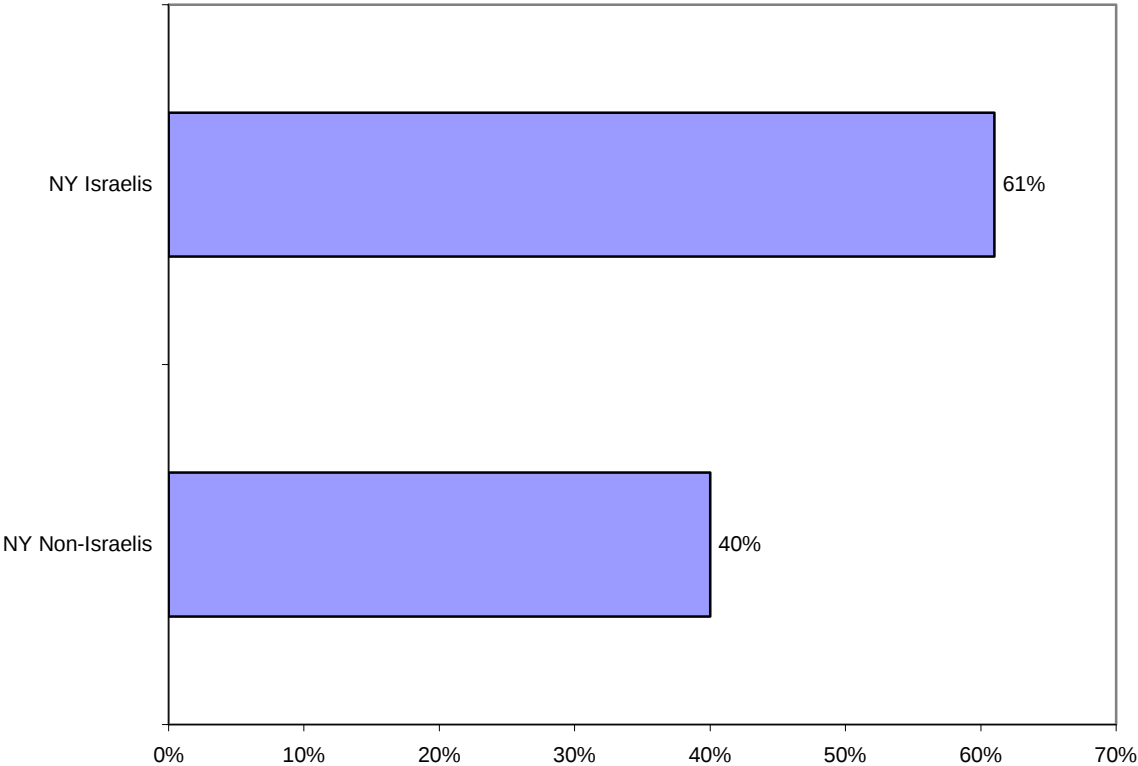
Age

A youthful population: Israelis living in New York tend to be relatively young; according to both the Jewish Community Study of New York and the United States Census, more than half of those living in New York are under the age of 45, and more than three quarters are under the age of 55. Again, this pattern is consistent with the common features of immigrant groups. Immigrants (and students and temporary residents from overseas) tend to consist heavily of young adults. Israelis reflect this common tendency.

Table 4: Age Breakdown

Age	Israelis in the U.S. (Census)	Israelis in N.Y. (Census)	Israelis in states other than N.Y. (Census)	N.Y. Non-Israelis (JCSNY)	N.Y. Israelis (JCSNY)
18–24	8	8	8	8	17
25–34	25	25	26	15	28
35–44	27	23	28	17	16
45–54	20	22	20	19	24
55–64	13	15	12	13	10
65–74	5	5	5	14	4
75+	2	3	2	14	2

Figure 3: Percentage Under 45, Israelis and Non-Israelis in New York, JCSNY

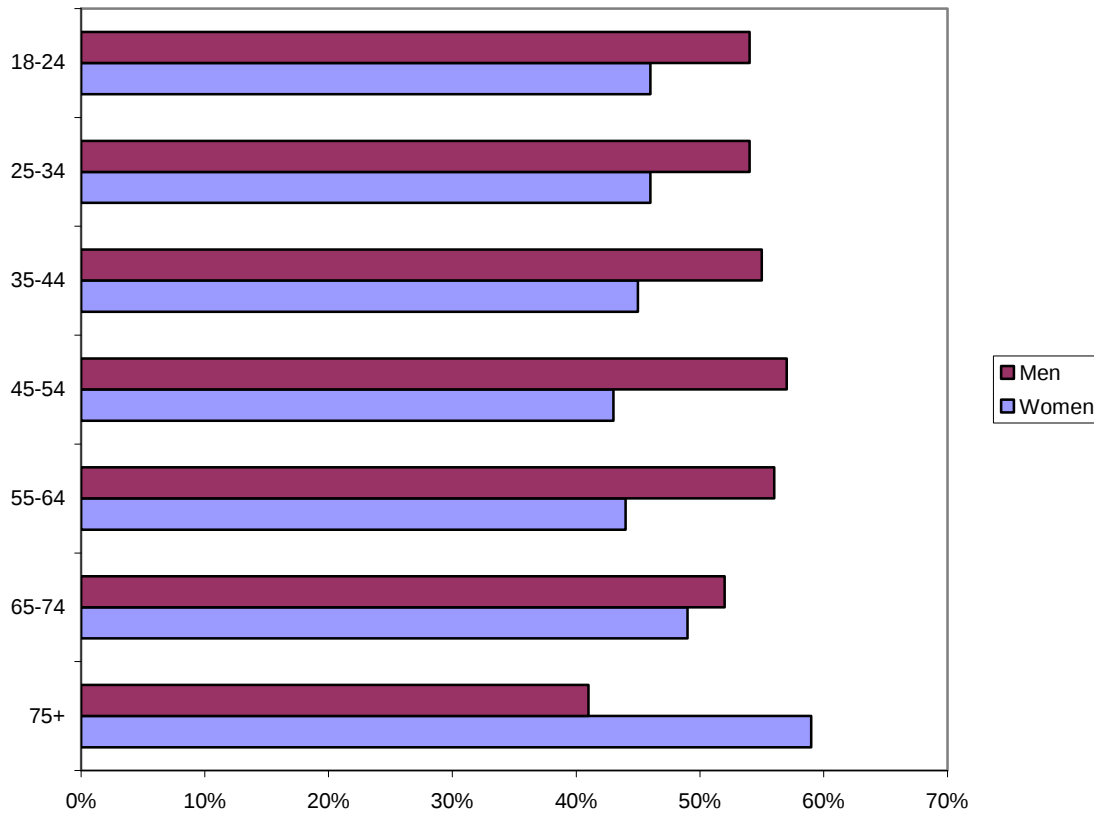


We may combine the gender and age distributions. The United States Census data show that Israeli-born men outnumber women in every age category except those older than 75.

Table 5: Age and Gender Breakdown, United States Census

	18–24	25–34	35–44	45–54	55–64	65–74	75+
Male	54	54	55	57	56	52	41
Female	46	46	45	43	44	49	59

Figure 4: Age and Gender Breakdown, United States Census



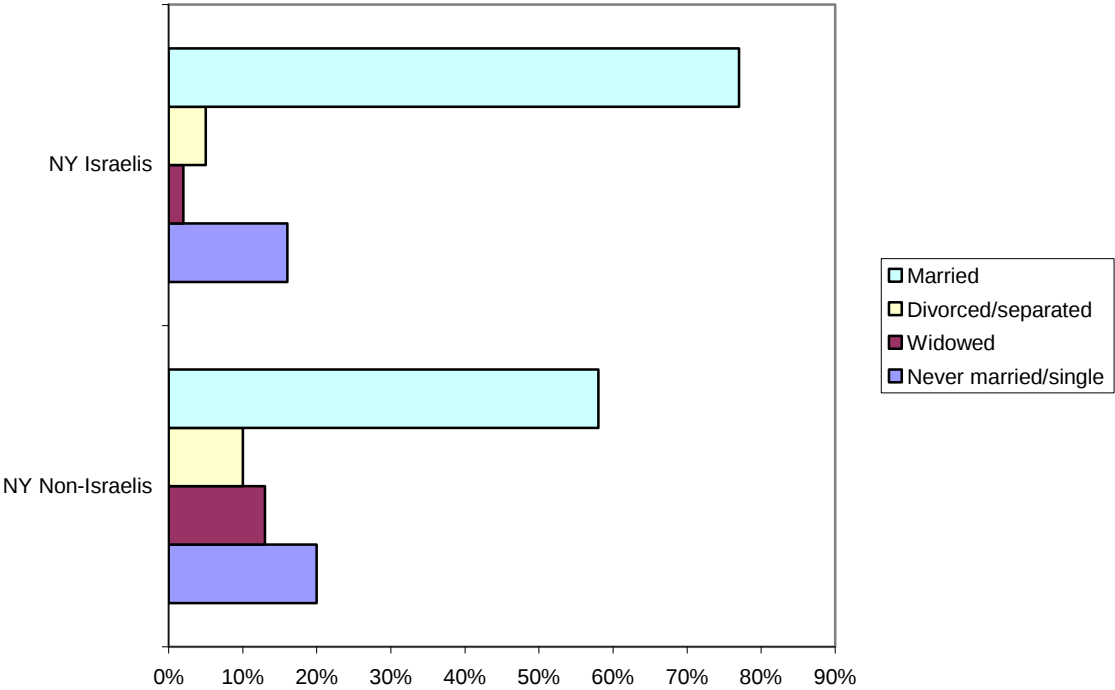
Marital Status

Many married, few divorced: About three quarters of Israelis living in New York are married; about 16 percent have never been married. New York–area Israelis are younger and, hence, are more often married and less often widowed than the New York Jewish population as a whole. In addition, the low rates of divorce suggest the impact of traditional familism (a culture supportive of traditional family patterns of early marriage, intact marriage, in-marriage, and high fertility) associated with the Orthodox worldwide and Israelis. (In fact, compared to other Western countries, Israelis are notable for their distinctive patterns of marriage, divorce, and fertility.) Noteworthy in these data is that divorce rates for non-Orthodox Israelis are also lower than their American counterparts (see Appendix).

Table 6: Marital Status

	Israelis in the U.S. (Census)	Israelis in N.Y. (Census)	Israelis in states other than N.Y. (Census)	N.Y. Non- Israelis (JCSNY)	N.Y. Israelis (JCSNY)
Married	71	74	69	58	77
Divorced or separated	8	6	9	10	5
Widowed	3	3	3	13	2
Never married/single	19	17	19	20	16

Figure 5: Marital Status Among Israelis and Non-Israelis in New York, JCSNY



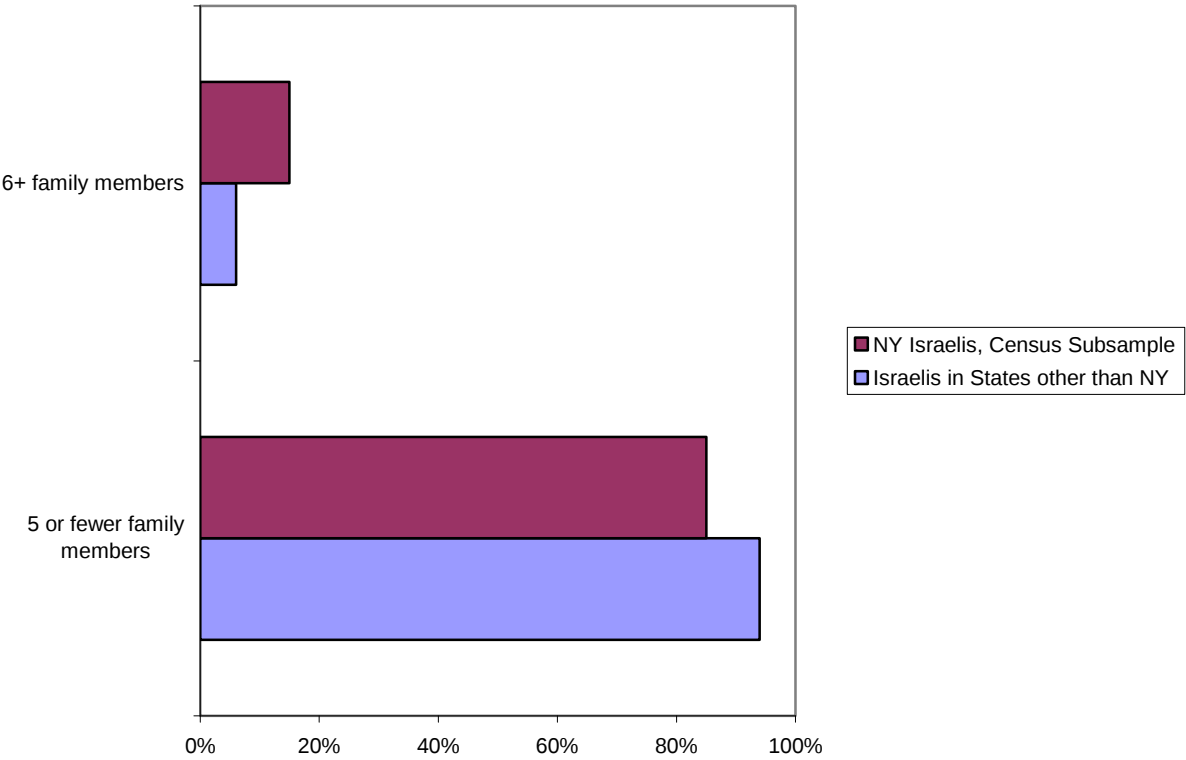
Household Size

Household size relatively large: About 40 percent of Israelis living in New York live in households with four or more family members, and just over half of Israelis living in New York have at least one child. The greater number of families with six or more members in New York (15 percent compared with 6 percent elsewhere in the U.S.) is an indication of the greater presence of Orthodox and *Haredi* Jews among Israelis in New York.

Table 7: Number of Family Members in Household Size

	Israelis in the U.S. (Census)	Israelis in N.Y. (Census)	Israelis in states other than N.Y. (Census)	N.Y. Non- Israelis (JCSNY)	N.Y. Israelis (JCSNY)
1 family member	20	18	20	27	12
2 family members	26	27	26	32	30
3 family members	17	15	18	15	16
4 family members	18	16	20	15	16
5 family members	11	10	11	5	11
6+ family members	8	15	6	6	16
Percent with children (based on “NA” responses to questions about children)	50	52	50	39	49

Figure 6: Breakdown of Household Size in New York and Other States, United States
Census



Education

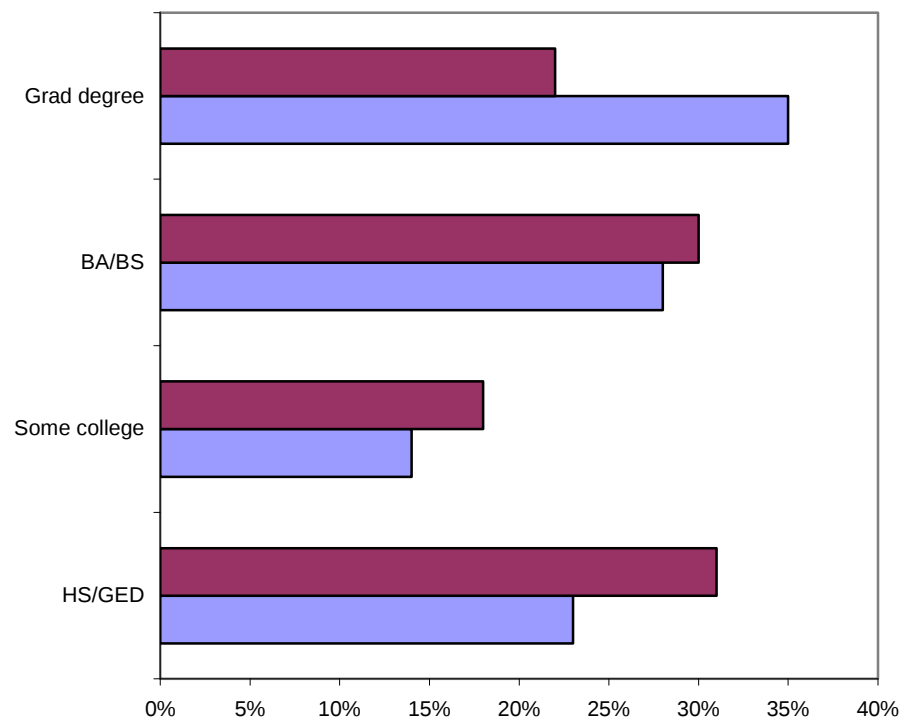
Somewhat less educated than non-Israelis: About 30 percent of Israelis in New York have only a high school degree, but a little more than 20 percent hold graduate degrees. According to the Census, about half of all Israelis in the U.S. hold at least a bachelor's degree.

With these patterns, Israelis in New York report lower levels of educational attainment than do both other New York–area Jews and Israelis elsewhere in the United States. In part, these patterns reflect lower levels of educational achievement in Israel than among American Jews, the lower levels of educational attainment among the Orthodox (both in Israel and the U.S.), and the tendency of the market in Israel to hold on to the most highly educated in the country. To some extent, higher education reduces the incentive to leave Israel in search of a better life elsewhere (although, for specific professions, emigration or a period of time abroad are *de rigueur*).

Table 8: Educational Attainment

	Israelis in the U.S. (Census)	Israelis in N.Y. (Census)	Israelis in states other than N.Y. (Census)	N.Y. Non- Israelis (JCSNY)	N.Y. Israelis (JCSNY)
High school/GED or less	30	36	27	23	31
Some college/associate's degree	20	17	21	14	18
Bachelor's degree	27	24	28	28	30
Graduate degree	24	23	24	35	22

Figure 7: Educational Attainment Among Israelis and Non-Israelis in New York, JCSNY



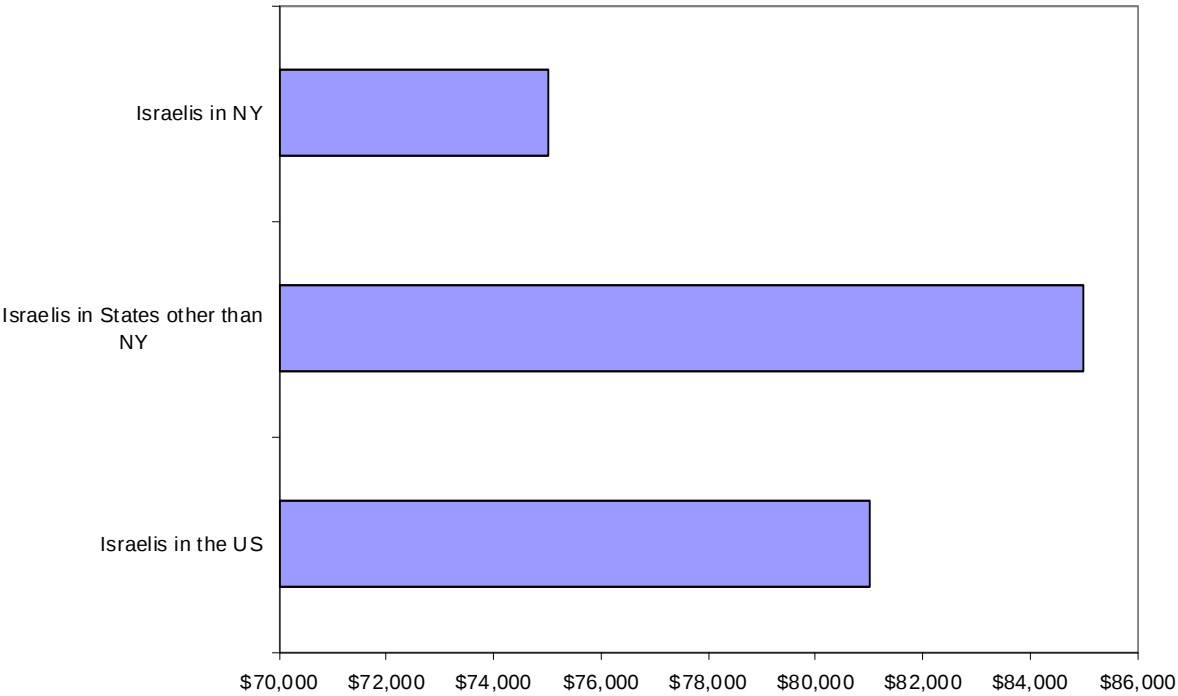
Income

Lower incomes for Israelis in New York: According to the Census, the median household income of Israeli-born Jews living in the U.S. is approximately \$81,000; for those outside New York, median household income rises to \$85,000. In contrast, the median household income of the Census's New York subsample is approximately \$75,000. The lower income of Israelis in New York as compared with the rest of the country is consistent with their lower levels of education, reported above, and their higher rates of Orthodoxy, reported below.

Table 9: Median Household Income

	Israelis in the U.S. (Census)	Israelis in N.Y. (Census)	Israelis in states other than N.Y. (Census)
Median household income	\$81,000	\$75,000	\$85,000

Figure 8: Median Household Income Among Israelis, United States
Census



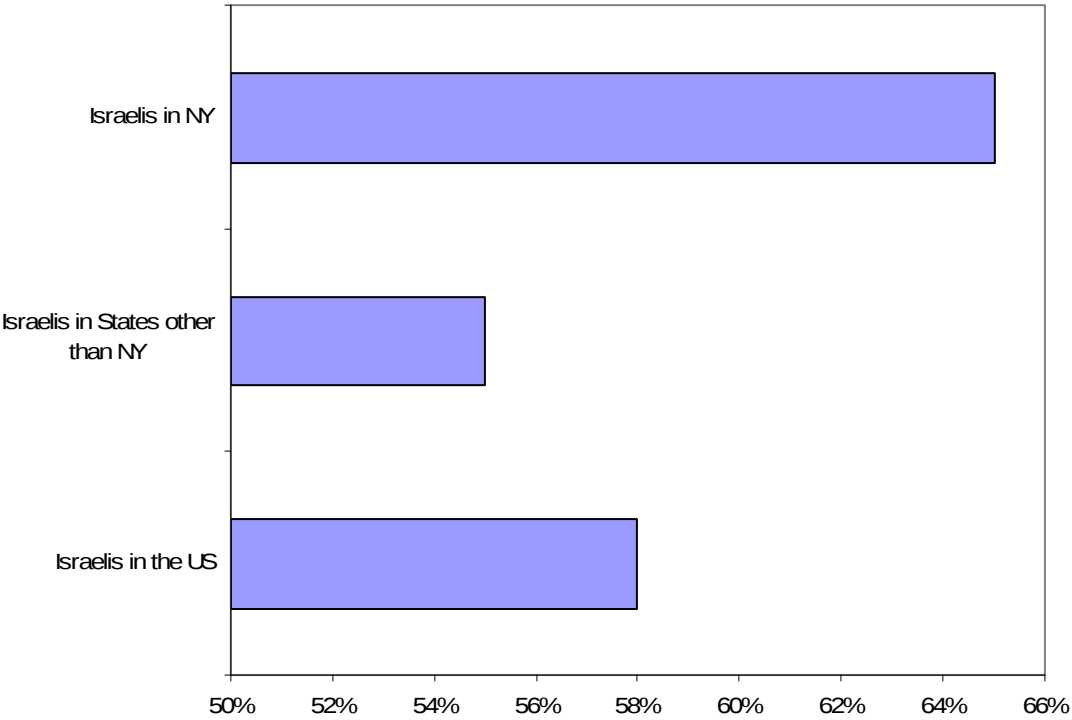
Years in the United States

Wide variation of years in the United States: According to the United States Census, fully 65 percent of Israelis living in New York have been living in the U.S. for more than 15 years, somewhat more than in the U.S. outside New York. The findings suggest that in recent years the migration from Israel has shifted somewhat to areas outside New York, perhaps reflecting the power of chain migration, where earlier migrants pave the way for later migrants, opening up more options for migrating Israelis to consider.

Table 10: Years in the United States, United States Census

	Israelis in the U.S.	Israelis in N.Y.	Israelis in states other than N.Y.
0–5	20	15	22
6–10	11	9	12
11–15	11	11	11
16–20	14	14	14
20+	44	51	41

Figure 9: Percentage of Israelis in the United States 16 or More Years, United States Census



Migration Status

Relatively stable migration status: Most Israelis living in New York were living in the same home one year ago. Only 3 percent were living in Israel last year. The higher levels of residential stability in New York is consistent with the results reported earlier, where we found larger numbers of recent arrivals outside New York as compared with the New York area.

Table 11: Migration Status One Year Ago, United States Census

	Israelis in the U.S.	Israelis in N.Y.	Israelis in states other than N.Y.
Same house	82	90	78
Moved within or between states	14	7	17
Abroad one year ago	5	4	5
Lived in Israel one year ago	4	3	4

Home Ownership

Own home: Just over half of Israelis living in New York own their homes.

Table 12: Home Ownership, United States Census

	Israelis in the U.S.	Israelis in N.Y.	Israelis in states other than N.Y.
Percent Own Home	59	52	62

United States Citizenship

Citizenship: According to the Jewish Community Study of New York, 73 percent of New York Israelis are U.S. citizens, compared to 77 percent of New York non-Israelis. The Census data show that 64 percent of New York Israelis hold American citizenship.

Table 13: Citizenship, United States Census

	Israelis in the U.S.	Israelis in N.Y.	Israelis in states other than N.Y.
Born abroad of American parents	8	5	9
Naturalized citizen	55	59	54
Not a citizen	37	36	37

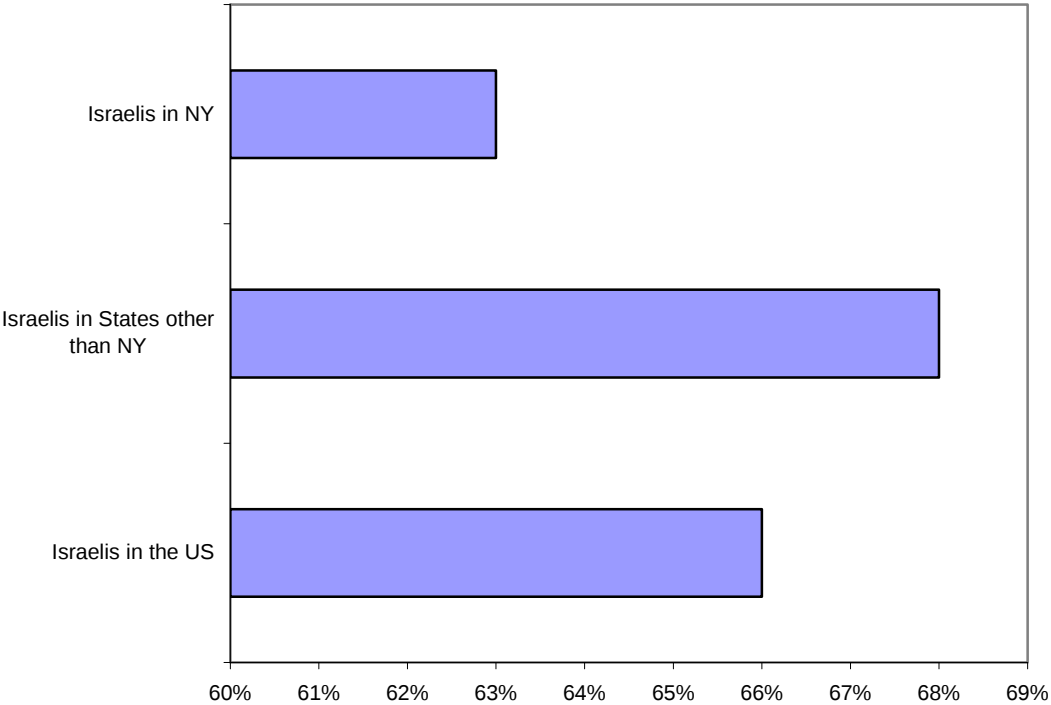
Languages Spoken

Lots of Hebrew, some Yiddish: Three quarters of Israeli-born adults living in New York speak Hebrew, and the overwhelming majority does not feel linguistically isolated (a relevant question asked on the United States Census studies). The far larger Yiddish-speaking minority in New York (9 percent, compared with only 1 percent elsewhere) points to the presence of an Israeli *Haredi* population in New York.

Table 14: Languages Spoken

	Israelis in the U.S. (Census)	Israelis in N.Y. (Census)	Israelis in states other than N.Y. (Census)
Speak Hebrew	66	63	68
Speak Yiddish/Jewish	3	9	1
Speaks English only	26	25	27
Percent not linguistically isolated	91	88	92

Figure 10: Percent Hebrew Speakers, United States Census



Jewish Involvement

Relatively High Levels of Jewish Involvement on All Measures

Conventional wisdom holds that Israelis are less Jewishly engaged than other Jews in New York, or the United States for that matter. It also holds that if and when Israelis outscore their American counterparts on measures of Jewish involvement, they do so in ways that reflect their Israeli background rather than their Jewish identities. Thus, they can be expected to widely know Hebrew or visit Israel frequently; but, for Israelis, many observers discount these indicators as distinctively Jewish behaviors. As matters turn out, the conventional wisdom about Israelis' Jewish engagement is wrong.

In fact, in terms of Jewish involvement, Israelis in New York (or the U.S.) outscore their American counterparts on almost every measure available on both the New York (Jewish Community Study of New York) and the national (National Jewish Population Survey) data sets. This pattern holds up even when we exclude Orthodox respondents from the analysis to "correct" for the large presence of Orthodox Jews among Israelis. Accordingly, Israelis who are non-Orthodox are more Jewishly engaged than New York or American Jews who are non-Orthodox (see Appendix).

There is one exception to this overall pattern: In New York (but not the nation), Israelis trail non-Israelis in making donations to their local Jewish federation. In other words, despite their high levels of Jewish involvement, in New York, Israelis under-participate in the UJA-Federation campaign.

The cultural and institutional significance of the questionnaires used in the National Jewish Population Survey (NJPS) and the Jewish Community Study of New York (JCSNY) studies underscores the significance of the findings on Israelis' Jewish involvement presented below. In effect, each questionnaire represents the official and consensual view of what constitutes being Jewish, at least in the minds of the researchers and the lay and professional leaders who contributed to designing both studies. The surveys present a broad and varied definition of Jewish engagement. That is to say, however Jewish identity is defined, then, on *every* item assessed (save one: federated giving in New York), Israelis outscore non-Israeli Jews in the U.S. and in the New York

studies. That the findings lead to the same inference in both studies lends greater confidence than if only one such study were available. [A methodological note: All percentages presented below are weighted by household in both the NJPS and the JCSNY data files.]

Denomination

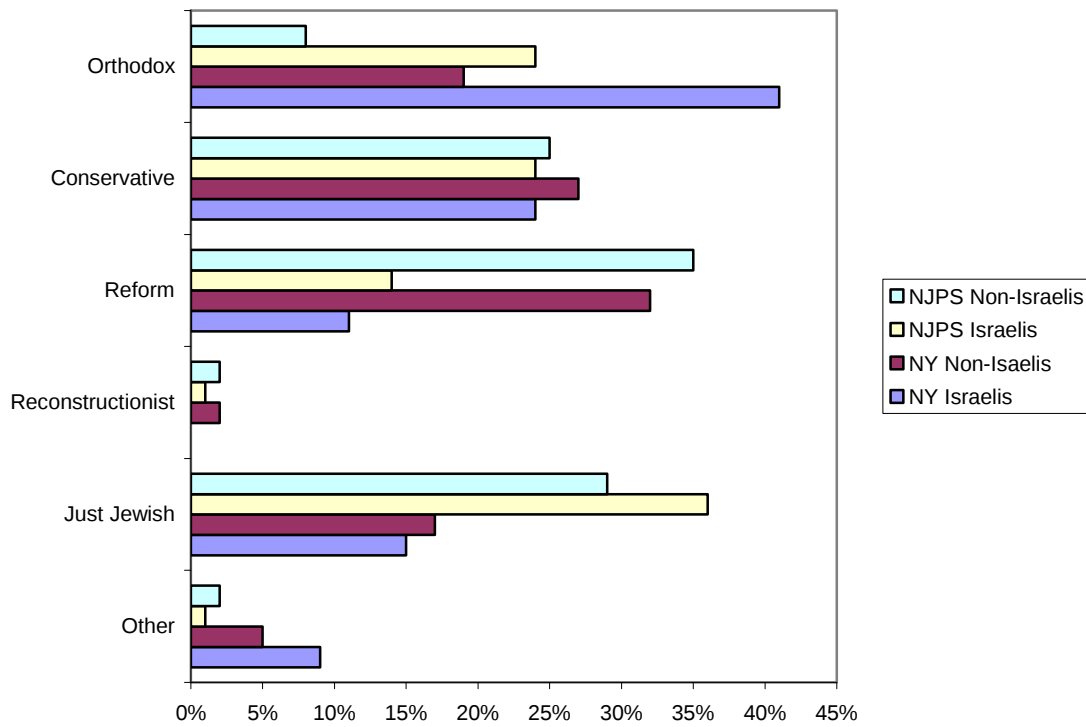
Many Orthodox: Although Israelis tend to eschew the denominational nomenclature used by U.S.-born American Jews, their responses to the question regarding their denomination are of some interest. In Israel, the major “denominational” choices are *dati*, “religious” or, functionally, “Orthodox”; *masorti*, traditional; and *hiloni*, “secular”. Here we find that Israelis vastly outscore non-Israelis with respect to identifying as Orthodox. At the same time, the Conservative numbers are roughly comparable, while far fewer Israelis than American Jews see themselves as Reform.

Perhaps surprisingly, Israelis use non-denominational labels not much more than non-Israelis. This pattern is surprising in that the only denominational label widely adopted in Israel is Orthodox, the English equivalent of *dati*. Less than 1 percent of Israelis in Israel identify as Reform or Conservative. That over a third so identify in the U.S. is testimony to rather rapid and complete acculturation.

Table 15: Denomination

	U.S. Non-Israelis (NJPS)	U.S. Israelis (NJPS)	N.Y. Non-Israelis (JCSNY)	N.Y. Israelis (JCSNY)
Orthodox	8	24	19	41
Conservative	25	24	27	24
Reform	35	14	32	11
Reconstructionist	2	1	2	0
Just Jewish	29	36	17	15
Other	2	1	5	9

Figure 11: Denominational Affiliation



In-Marriage and Jewish Friendship

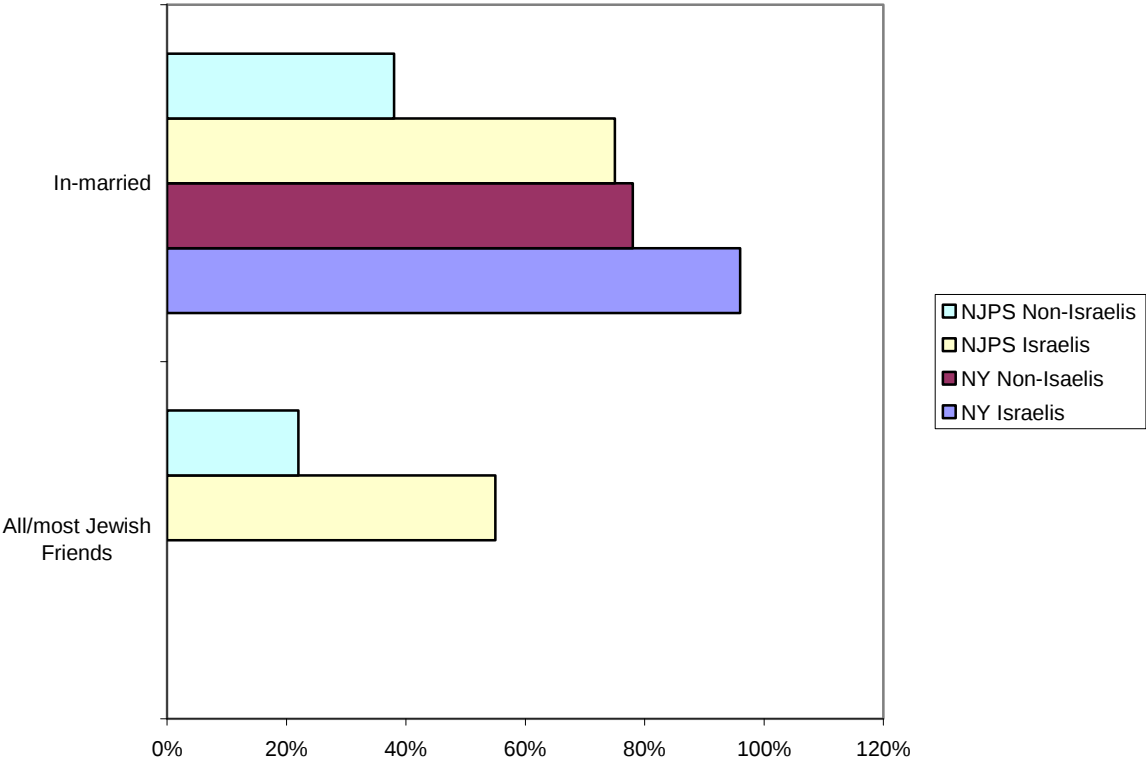
High levels of in-marriage and Jewish friendship: More Israelis have Jewish spouses and many Jewish friends than do non-Israelis. The national sample (National Jewish Population Survey) showed that Israelis are far more likely to be in-married (75 percent) than their American counterparts (38 percent). [We use “American” to refer to all American Jews who are not Israeli-born.] This finding was duplicated in the Jewish Community Study of New York sample as well, where 96 percent of New York Israelis are in-married compared with 78 percent of non-Israeli New Yorkers. In the national sample, far more Israelis (55 percent) have all or mostly Jewish friends than their American counterparts (a mere 22 percent).

Jewish spouses and friends, an important component of Jewish identity, also serve to reinforce other ways of being Jewish. In time, Israelis will surely follow the path of other immigrant groups and find more friends and spouses outside their ethnic group. But, for now, owing in part to the recency of their migration (all, by definition, are first generation), Israelis live their intimate social lives with other Jews, and, in all likelihood, with a good number of Israelis as well.

Table 16: Marriage and Friendship

	U.S. Non-Israelis (NJPS)	U.S. Israelis (NJPS)	N.Y. Non-Israelis (JCSNY)	N.Y. Israelis (JCSNY)
In-married	38	75	78	96
All or most Jewish friends	22	55	--	--

Figure 12: Percent In-married, All or Most Jewish Friends



Communal Affiliation

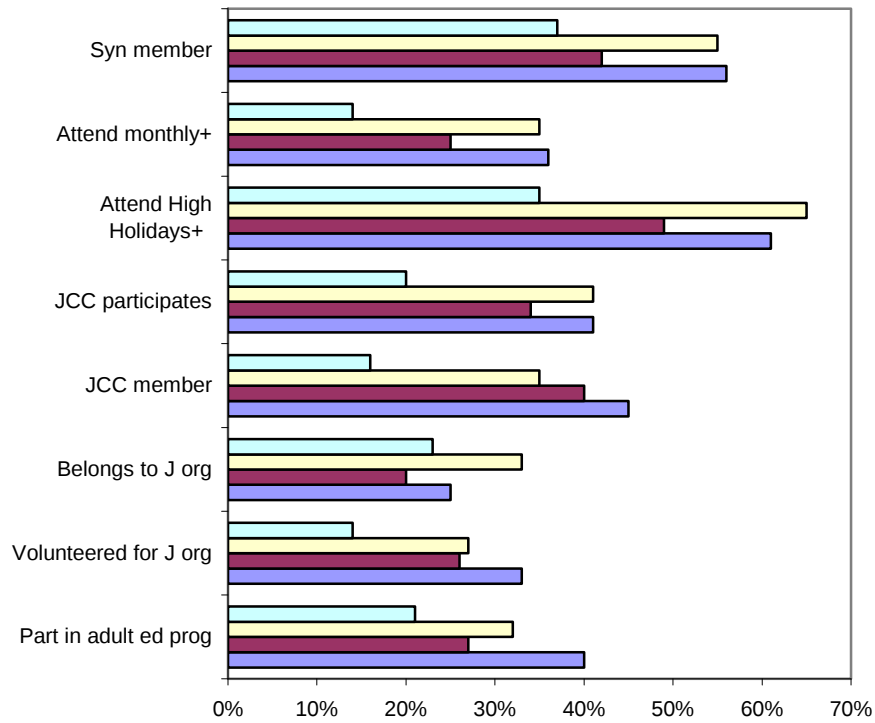
Many communally affiliated in all ways: Communal institutions are especially important to the Jewish identities of American Jews. They are far less important to the Jewish identities of Israeli Jews when they live in Israel; however, when they come to the U.S., Israelis do affiliate with Jewish communal institutions, and they do so even more than their American counterparts for whom these are “native” institutions. Whether we are speaking about synagogues, Jewish community centers, Jewish organizations, or Jewish charitable giving, Israelis — in both New York and the United States — outscore non-Israelis.

Thus, according to the National Jewish Population survey (NJPS) and the Jewish Community Study of New York (JCSNY), Israelis more frequently than American Jews join synagogues, attend services, participate in programs in JCCs, belong to other Jewish organizations, and volunteer for Jewish causes. More New York Israelis visit a Jewish museum or attend a cultural event, participate in adult Jewish education, and visit Jewish websites. By and large, these same contrasting patterns emerge among the non-Orthodox segments of both populations (see Appendix).

Table 17: Jewish Affiliations

	U.S. Non- Israelis (NJPS)	U.S. Israelis (NJPS)	N.Y. Non- Israelis (JCSNY)	N.Y. Israelis (JCSNY)
Synagogue member	37	55	42	56
Attends synagogue monthly or more	14	35	25	36
Attends synagogue infrequently, including High Holidays	35	65	49	61
Participates in JCC programs	20	41	34	41
JCC member	16	35	40	45
Belongs to a Jewish organization	23	33	20	25
Volunteers for a Jewish organization	14	27	26	33
Visited a Jewish museum or attended a Jewish cultural event in past year	--	--	61	68
Participated in an adult Jewish education program in last year	21	32	27	40
Visited Jewish websites last year	--	--	36	52
Likelihood of looking for Jewish places of interest when traveling	21	38	--	--

Figure 13: Synagogue Membership, Attendance, Other Indicators of Jewish Involvement



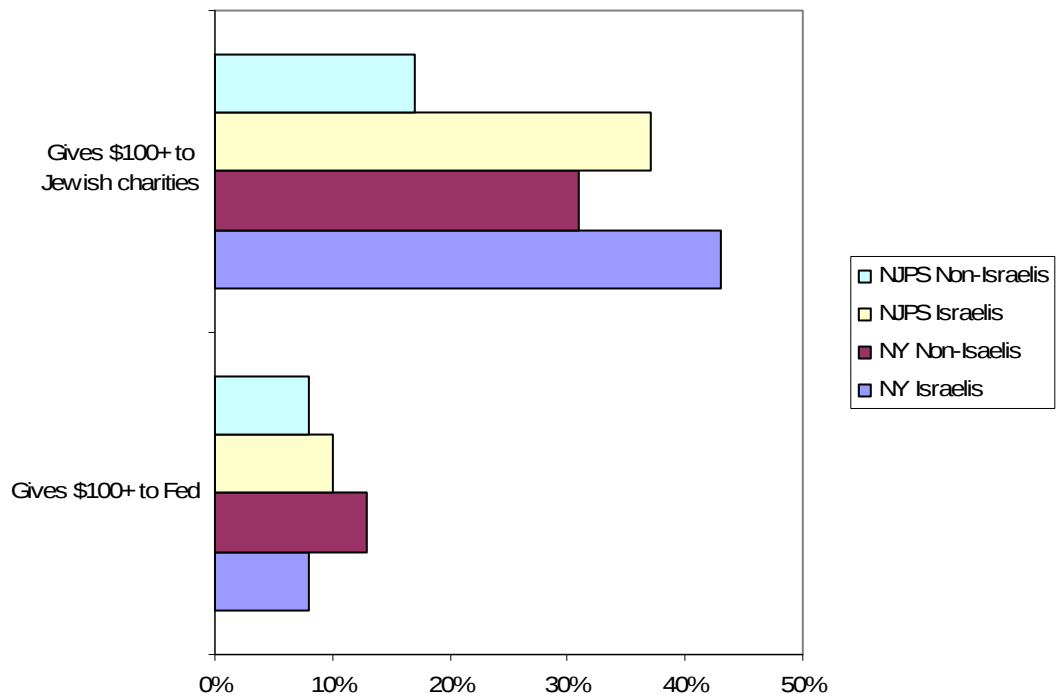
Philanthropic Giving

Philanthropic giving and the UJA-Federation exception: The pattern of Israelis outscoring Americans extends to Jewish giving. According to the National Jewish Population Survey (NJPS), Israelis were more likely to give to Jewish charities and Jewish federations than their American counterparts. We see the same pattern in the Jewish Community Study of New York (JCSNY) with respect to charities in general, but a reversal with respect to federated giving. The relative under-representation of Israelis as donors to UJA-Federation of New York may provide part of the explanation why UJA-Federation officials sense that New York Israelis are under-engaged in Jewish life. But, it should be noted, UJA-Federation giving is the solitary indicator where New York Israelis trail their non-Israeli counterparts, and their lower rates of UJA-Federation giving may reflect their lower levels of income and affluence.

Table 18: Philanthropic Giving

	U.S. Non- Israelis (NJPS)	U.S. Israelis (NJPS)	N.Y. Non- Israelis (JCSNY)	N.Y. Israelis (JCSNY)
Gives \$100 or more to Jewish charities	17	37	31	43
Gives \$100 or more to a federation	8	10	13	8

Figure 14: Israeli and Non-Israeli Patterns of Giving



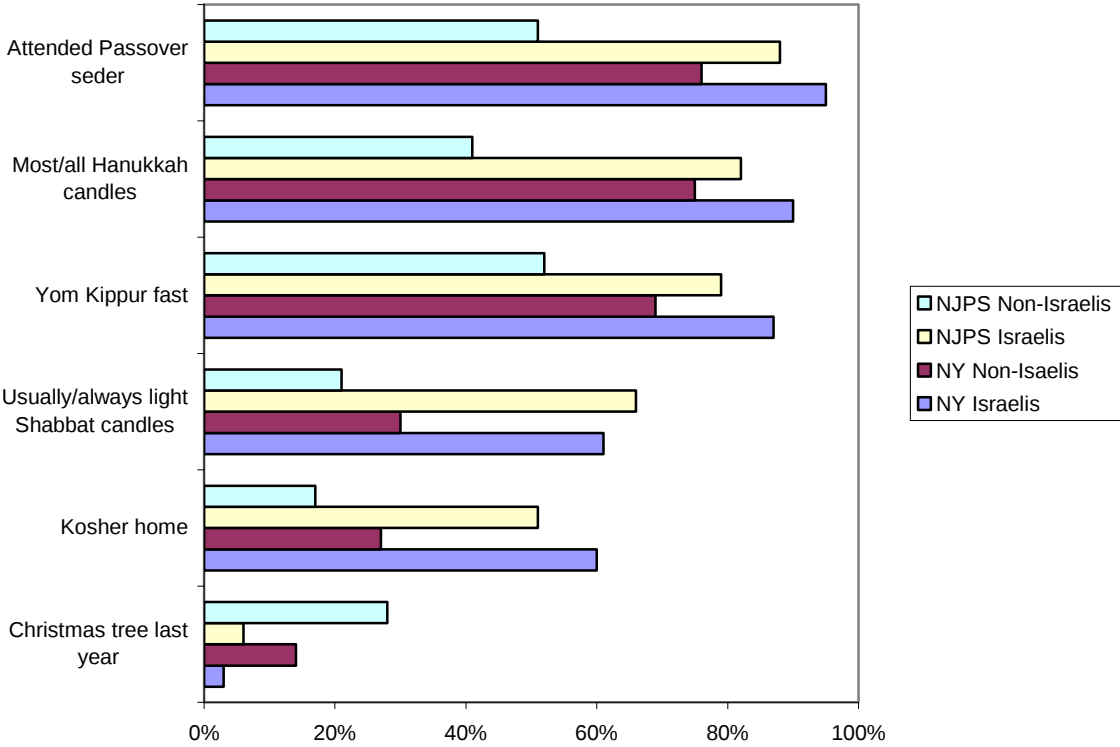
Ritual Observance

Ritually active: What is true of communal affiliation is also true of religious practices of all kinds. Compared to non-Israelis, Israelis in New York more often light Shabbat candles (61 percent, compared with 30 percent), keep a kosher home (60 percent, compared with 27 percent), always or usually light Chanukah candles (90 percent, compared with 75 percent), and attend a Passover seder (95 percent, compared with 76 percent). Again, the same differences emerge among the non-Orthodox alone (see Appendix). In other words, Israelis are more observant not only because they are more often Orthodox; the non-Orthodox Israeli undertakes all rituals queried more often than non-Orthodox non-Israelis.

Table 19: Ritual Observance

	U.S. Non- Israelis (NJPS)	U.S. Israelis (NJPS)	N.Y. Non- Israelis (JCSNY)	N.Y. Israelis (JCSNY)
Attend Seder	51	88	76	95
Light Chanukah candles	41	82	75	90
Fast on Yom Kippur	52	79	69	87
Usually/always light Shabbat candles	21	66	30	61
Kosher at home	17	51	27	60
Kosher outside home	55	64	--	--
Had Christmas tree last year	28	6	14	3

Figure 15: Ritual Behaviors Among Israelis and Non-Israelis



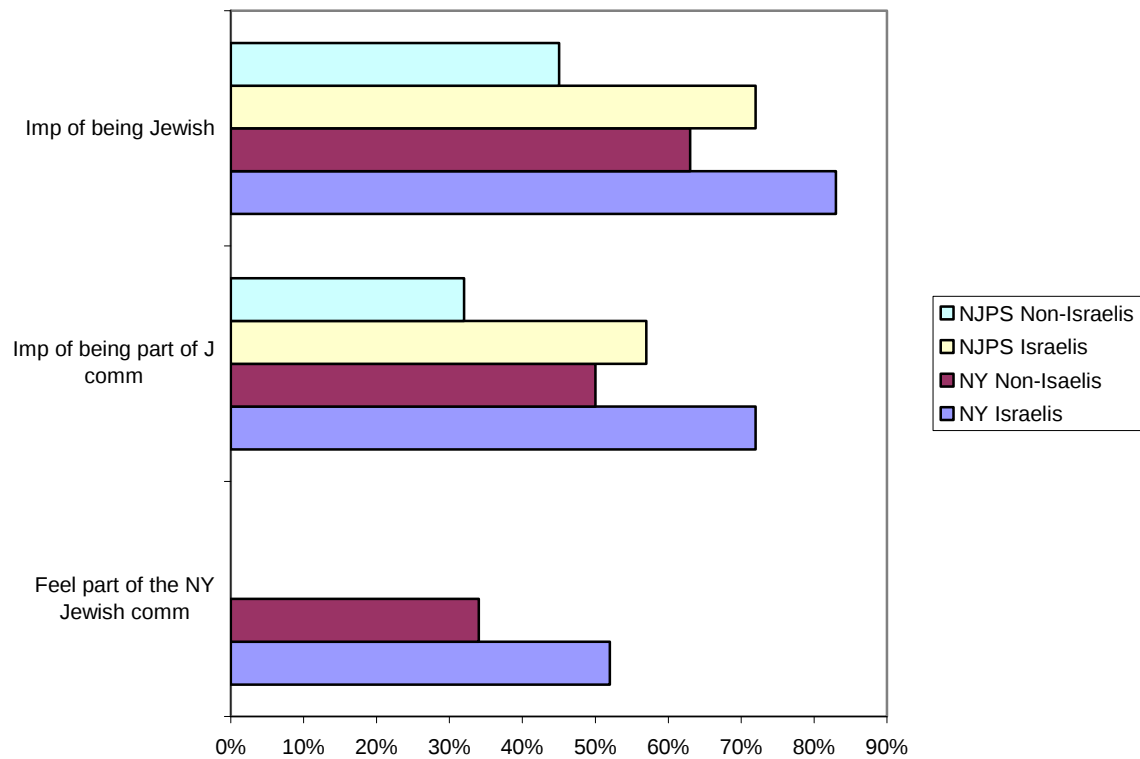
Collective Jewish Identity

Community and peoplehood: Subjectively, Israeli Jews outscore their American counterparts when asked how important being Jewish is to them, whether it's important to be part of a Jewish community, and even whether they feel a part of the Jewish community in New York. More than half, 52 percent, of Israeli Jews said that they very much feel part of the Jewish community in New York, compared with only 34 percent of non-Israeli New Yorkers. If a primary goal of UJA-Federation policy is to make Israelis feel they belong to a Jewish community, then the results suggest that Israelis in New York have already succeeded in doing so, largely on their own.

Table 20: Importance of Being Jewish and Part of a Community

	U.S. Non- Israelis (NJPS)	U.S. Israelis (NJPS)	N.Y. Non- Israelis (JCSNY)	N.Y. Israelis (JCSNY)
Importance of being Jewish (very)	45	72	63	83
Importance of being part of a Jewish community (very)	32	57	50	72
Feel a part of the Jewish community in New York (a lot)	--	--	34	52

Figure 16: Importance of Being Jewish, Being Part of the Jewish Community

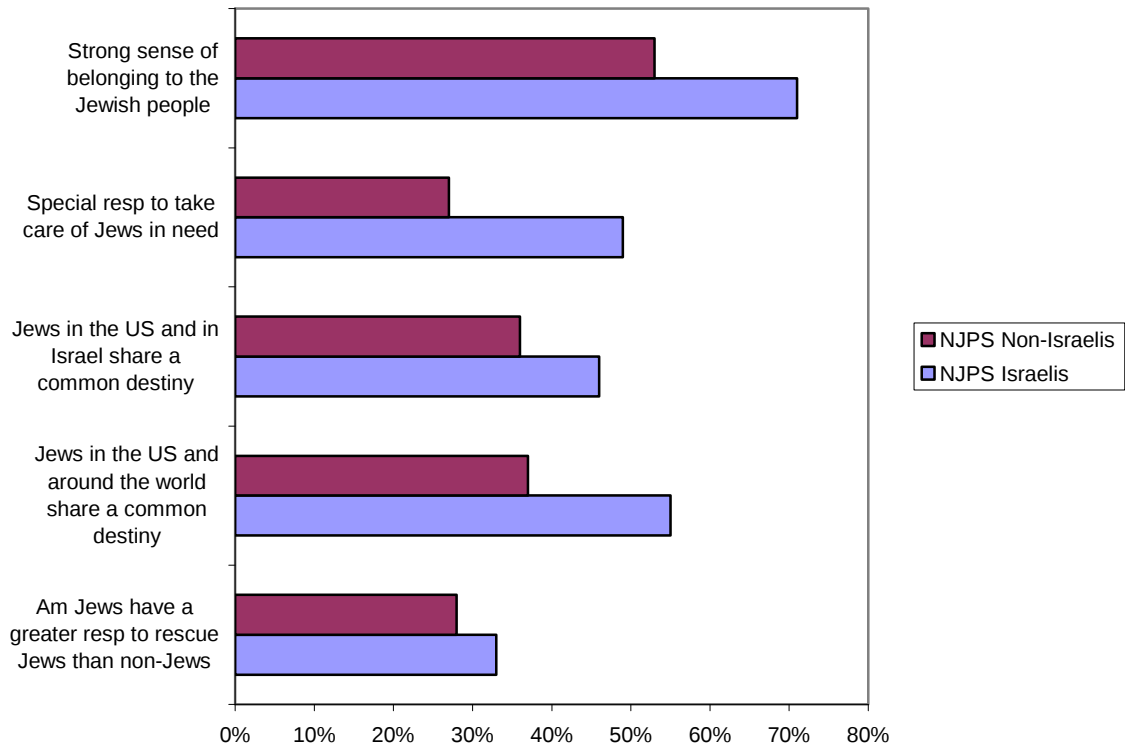


According to the National Jewish Population Survey (NJPS), Israelis consistently outscore their American counterparts in terms of feeling a sense of belonging to the Jewish people and feeling a special responsibility to take care of Jews in need. Israelis are more likely to indicate that Jews around the world share a common destiny. Significant percentages of Israelis indicated that Judaism guides their important life decisions. All of these items point to what may be called a stronger “collective Jewish identity” on the part of Israelis, a stronger sense that they belong to a Jewish group, with affinities and obligations toward that group.

Table 21: Measures of Jewish Peoplehood, NJPS

	Non-Israelis	Israelis
Strong sense of belonging to Jewish people	53	71
Special responsibility to take care of Jews in need	27	49
Jews in the U.S. and Jews in Israel share a common destiny	36	46
Jews in the U.S. and Jews elsewhere around the world share a common destiny	37	55
When people are in distress, American Jews have a greater responsibility to rescue Jews than non-Jews	28	33
Being Jewish has little to do with how sees self (strongly disagree)	27	40
Judaism guides important life decisions	20	44

Figure 17: Sense of Jewish Peoplehood Among Israelis and Non-Israelis



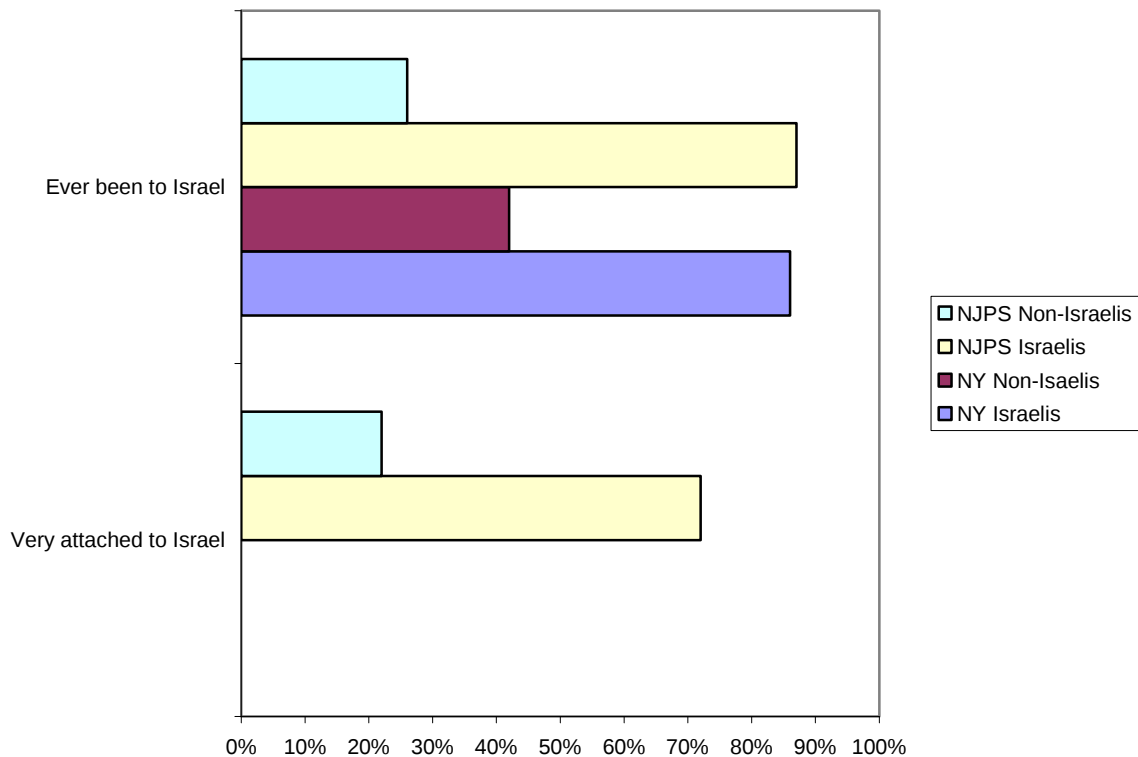
Travel and Attachment to Israel

High level of Israel travel and attachment: Not surprisingly, the overwhelming majority of Israelis have traveled to Israel as adults (86 percent), whereas only 42 percent of non-Israeli New Yorkers have done so. The national sample indicates an enormous gap between Israelis and Americans in terms of their emotional attachment to Israel: 72 percent of Israelis are very attached to Israel as contrasted with just 22 percent of Americans. In accord with expectations, Israelis are far more attached to Israel and its society than are their American counterparts.

Table 22: Travel and Attachment to Israel

	U.S. Non- Israelis (NJPS)	U.S. Israelis (NJPS)	N.Y. Non- Israelis (JCSNY)	N.Y. Israelis (JCSNY)
Ever been to Israel as an adult	26	87	42	86
Level of emotional attachment to Israel (very)	22	72	--	--

Figure 18: Travel to Israel as an Adult and Attachment to Israel

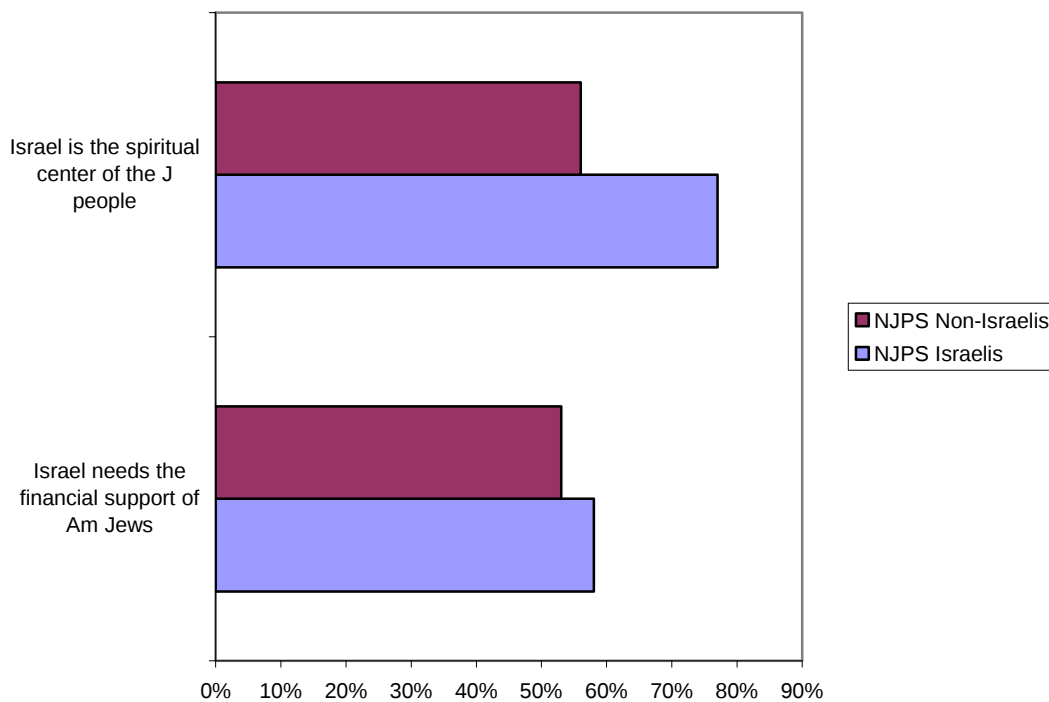


Several other attitudes toward Israel follow the same contours. According to the National Jewish Population Survey (NJPS), Israelis are more likely to feel that Israel is the spiritual center of the Jewish people, and most Israelis (slightly more so than Americans) believe that Israel still needs the financial support of American Jews. Israelis in Israel are rarely socialized into organized Jewish philanthropic giving, even as they recognize the historic engagement of diaspora Jewish philanthropy in the building of their society. In coming to the United States, Israelis seem to have brought their views toward Israel-oriented philanthropy in line with their American counterparts.

Table 23: Israel as the Spiritual Center of the Jewish people, In Need of American Jews' Financial Support, NJPS

	Non-Israelis	Israelis
Israel is the spiritual center of the Jewish people	56	77
Israel still needs the financial support of American Jews	53	58

Figure 19: Israel as the Spiritual Center of the Jewish People and in Need of American Jews' Financial Support



Jewish Communal Priorities

The New York survey asked a revealing question about respondents' preferences in Jewish communal policies. In almost all instances, Israelis attach a greater importance to a range of Jewish communal policy alternatives, suggesting that they are in fact more drawn to the Jewish communal agenda than non-Israelis.

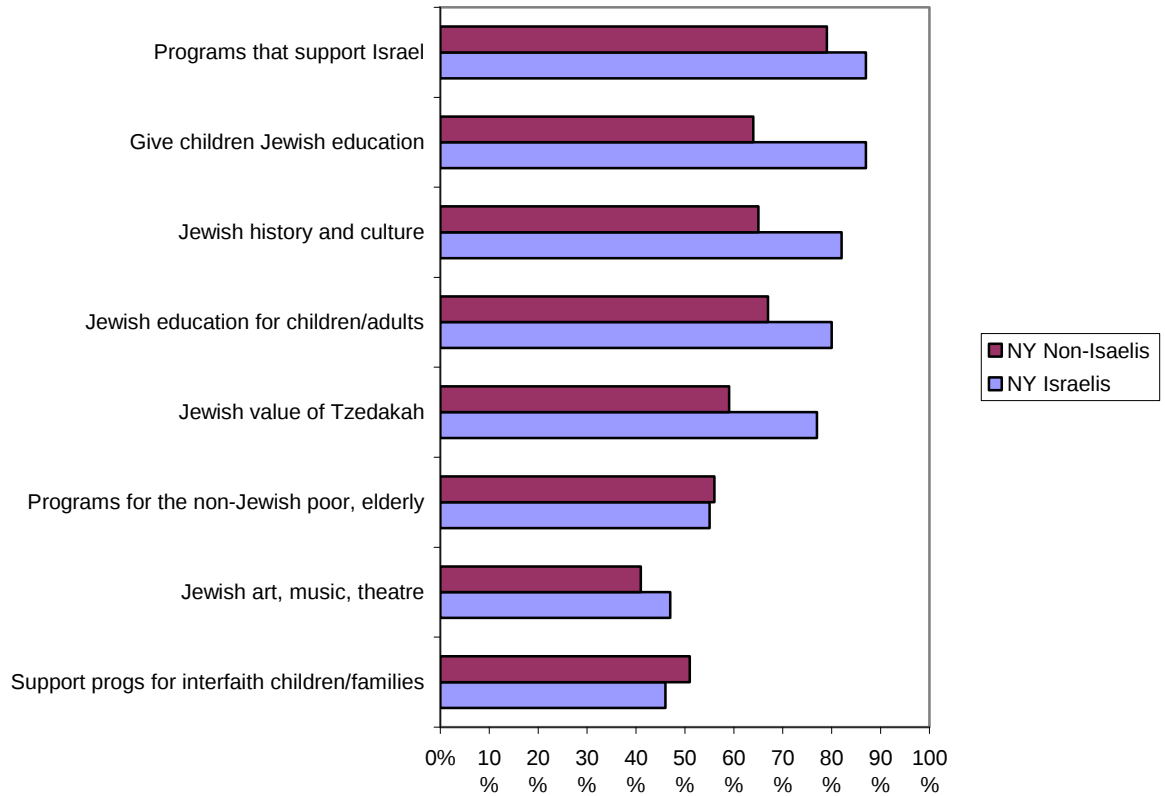
Thus, Israelis in New York consistently outscore their American counterparts when asked about the importance of Jewish history and culture, giving children a Jewish education, the importance of Jewish value of *tzedakah*, and the importance that the New York Jewish community support Jewish education for children and adults.

The two departures from these patterns are revealing. Israelis were less likely than others to attach an importance to helping the non-Jewish poor and to programming for interfaith couples. This pattern may reflect the experiences and culture of the Israeli society from which they derive.

Table 24: Jewish Communal Priorities, JCSNY

Importance of . . . (very)	N.Y. Non- Israelis	N.Y. Israelis
Importance that the New York Jewish community support programs that support Israel	79	87
Importance to give children a Jewish education	64	87
Importance to learn about Jewish history and culture	65	82
Importance that the New York Jewish community support Jewish education for children and adults	67	80
Importance of Jewish value of <i>tzedakah</i>	59	77
Importance that the New York Jewish community support programs for the <i>non</i> -Jewish poor, elderly	56	55
Importance of Jewish art, music, theatre	41	47
Importance that the New York Jewish community support programs for interfaith children and families	51	46

Figure 20: Jewish Priorities Among Israeli and Non-Israelis in New York, JCSNY



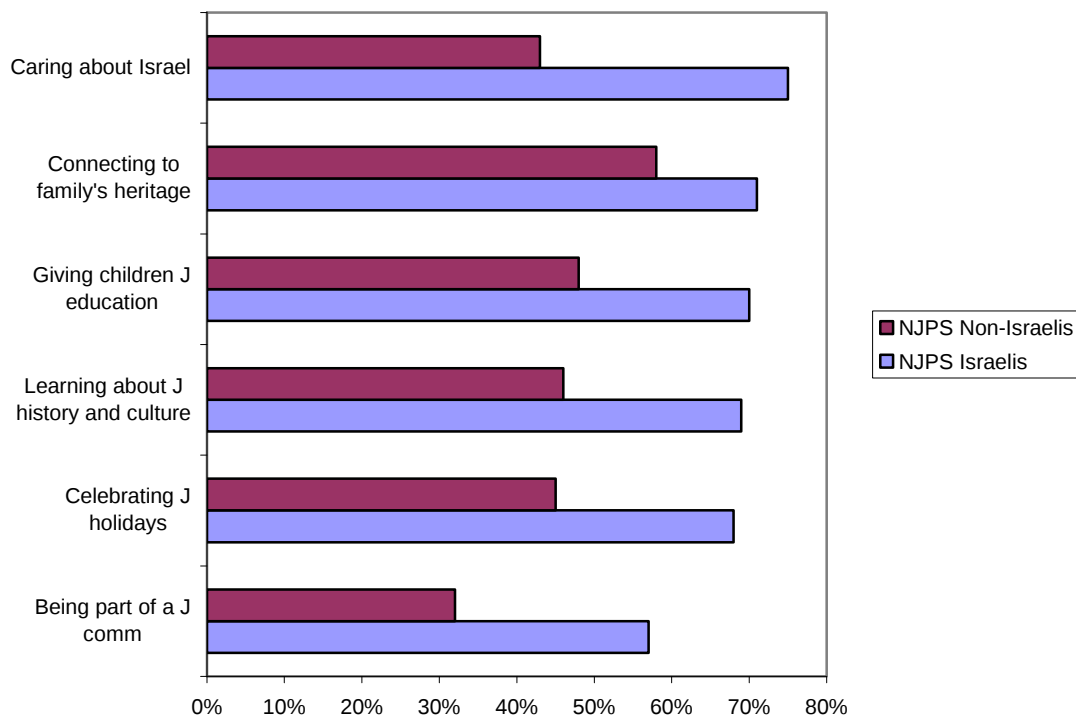
Jewish Identity

Jewish identity priorities: In the national sample, a different question asked respondents for their personal priorities for “being Jewish” — that is, for their personal identities as Jews. Again, Israelis largely outscored non-Israelis. The chart below highlights the gaps between Israeli and American Jews in terms of what they feel is important as compared with “being Jewish.” The rows are ordered from highest to lowest, according to Israelis’ preferences.

Table 25: Jewish Identity Priorities, NJPS

Being Jewish . . . (a lot)	Non-Israelis	Israelis
Remembering the Holocaust	73	88
Caring about Israel	43	75
Connecting to family’s heritage	58	71
Leading an ethical and moral life	68	70
Giving your children a Jewish education	48	70
Learning about Jewish history and culture	46	69
Celebrating Jewish holidays	45	68
Making the world a better place	58	64
Countering anti-Semitism	59	64
Being part of a Jewish community	32	57
Believing in God	60	56
Supporting Jewish organizations	27	55
Giving future children a Jewish education	40	55
Having a rich spiritual life	41	54
Attending synagogue	19	33
Observing <i>halachah</i>	24	31

Figure 21: “Being Jewish”: Selected Differences Between Israelis and Non-Israelis



Summary and Conclusions

About 30,000 Israeli adults live in the New York area, and their households are home to about 112,000 individuals. Greater New York is home to about 28 percent of the Israeli Jews in the United States.

This is a relatively youthful population with high rates of marriage, low rates of divorce, and somewhat larger families than their non-Israeli counterparts, both in New York and throughout the country. Relative to other New York–area Jews, the Israeli population is somewhat less educated and less affluent. Vast majorities speak Hebrew and a noticeable segment speaks Yiddish, indicative of a presence of *Haredi* Jews among the New York–area population.

In Jewish terms, this is a highly engaged population. A plurality is Orthodox. Compared to non-Israeli Jews, the Israelis in New York are more embedded in Jewish social networks, more communally engaged (except for giving to UJA-Federation), more ritually observant, more tied to Israel, and, in their expressed attitudes, more committed to Jewish life and continuity. Moreover, these gaps for the most part hold up when we compare non-Orthodox Israelis with their non-Orthodox “American” counterparts. Orthodoxy alone does not account for the Israeli lead in nearly every aspect of Jewish identity and community.

Heretofore, the basic policy assumptions about Israelis in New York are that they consist of hundreds of thousands of souls that are relatively distant from Jewish life. Advocates and leaders assumed, in short, that this was a large Jewish population at risk of severing its connection with Jewish life — if not in this generation then in the next.

These assumptions need to be rethought. The basis for policies to engage Israelis need to be brought into alignment with the reality they present. Although not as large as many have argued, Israelis do represent a considerable fraction of New York–area Jewry. Moreover, ongoing migration from Israel figures to bring about 2,000 new Israelis to the

New York area annually — a continual source of replenishment of this culturally distinctive and socially pivotal population in New York Jewry.

As strong as their connections to one other and to being Jewish may be, over the years and the generations to come, Israelis are likely to evolve culturally and religiously, perhaps even more so than native-born New York Jews. Immigrants and their children change their ways far more rapidly and thoroughly than those who are residentially stable. Hence, from this point of view, this Jewishly strong population segment may indeed be seen as more at risk than others.

One distinctive feature of the Israeli population in New York is that it brings a cultural variety and richness to New York–area Jewry that no other population segment, with the exception of the Russian-speaking population, can provide at this time. Once, New York–area Jewry displayed strong visible influences of Sephardi, German, Eastern European, and other Jewish national-origin groups; today, these distinctions are far more muted, and the contribution of Israeli (and Russian-origin) Jews to New York’s Jewish cultural mosaic is that much more precious and more vital. UJA-Federation policy has largely been directed at integrating Israeli Jews into existing local institutions and practices; equally important, and perhaps in contradistinction, is the goal of preserving and nurturing the distinctive Israeli subcommunity with its variations in language, politics, culture, and religious patterns. And, unlike any other group, Israelis offer New York Jewry a living link to the Jewish homeland, with possibilities in education, travel, commerce, and cultural exchange. In short, New York Jewry has a strong interest in the survival of a distinctive Israeli subcommunity with all the assets it presents.

In short, rather than seeing the high levels of Jewish engagement on the part of New York–area Israelis as a reason (or pretext) to move on to other needs, these levels should be seen as reflective of assets worthy of nurturance, development, and exploitation in the best positive sense of the term. The Jewishness of Israelis in New York may not be especially at risk, and certainly not in comparison with other New York–area Jews. The true risk lies in the possible failure to recognize the richness and potential presented by this culturally distinctive and socially connected Jewish subpopulation. Therein lies the

true challenge to creative Jewish communal policymaking and those leaders who fashion it.

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Appendix

Comparing Orthodox With Non-Orthodox Israelis

In-Marriage and Friendship

	NJPS, Non- Orthodox Non- Israelis	NJPS, Non- Orthodox Israelis	JCSNY, Non- Orthodox Non- Israelis	JCSNY, Non- Orthodox Israelis
In-married	35	67	72	95
All or most Jewish friends	19	45	--	--

Synagogue Attendance and Jewish Organizational Membership

	NJPS, Non- Orthodox Non- Israelis	NJPS, Non- Orthodox Israelis	JCSNY, Non- Orthodox Non- Israelis	JCSNY, Non- Orthodox Israelis
Synagogue member	34	43	34	40
Attends synagogue monthly or more	12	23	17	20
Attends synagogue infrequently, including High Holidays	32	57	43	53
Participates in JCC programs	19	40	33	39
JCC member	15	31	38	25
Belongs to a Jewish organization	22	29	17	27
Volunteers for a Jewish organization	13	21	21	22
Visited a Jewish museum or attended a Jewish cultural event in past year	--	--	59	65
Participated in an adult Jewish education program in last year	18	21	21	27
Visited Jewish websites last year	--	--	33	59
Likelihood of looking for Jewish places of interest when traveling	19	29	--	--

Philanthropy

	NJPS, Non- Orthodox Non- Israelis	NJPS, Non- Orthodox Israelis	JCSNY, Non- Orthodox Non- Israelis	JCSNY, Non- Orthodox Israelis
Gives \$100 or more to Jewish charities	15	29	26	41
Gives \$100 or more to a federation	7	10	13	8

Ritual Behaviors

	NJPS, Non- Orthodox Non- Israelis	NJPS, Non- Orthodox Israelis	JCSNY, Non- Orthodox Non- Israelis	JCSNY, Non- Orthodox Israelis
Usually/always light Shabbat candles	17	56	20	42
Kosher at home	12	39	15	41
Kosher outside home	42	47	--	--
Fast on Yom Kippur	49	73	64	79
Light Chanukah candles	39	76	71	85
Attend Seder	49	85	73	94
Had Christmas tree last year	29	6	16	3

Jewish Peoplehood

	NJPS, Non-Orthodox Non-Israelis	NJPS, Non-Orthodox Israelis	JCSNY, Non-Orthodox Non-Israelis	JCSNY, Non-Orthodox Israelis
Importance of being Jewish (very)	42	65	56	75
Importance of being part of a Jewish community (very)	29	51	42	56
Feel a part of the Jewish community in New York (a lot)	--	--	25	33

	NJPS, Non-Orthodox Non-Israelis	NJPS, Non-Orthodox Israelis
Strong sense of belonging to Jewish people	50	63
Special responsibility to take care of Jews in need	24	40
Jews in the U.S. and Jews in Israel share a common destiny	33	41
Jews in the U.S. and Jews elsewhere around the world share a common destiny	35	51
When people are in distress, American Jews have a greater responsibility to rescue Jews than non-Jews	26	28
Being Jewish has little to do with how sees self (strongly disagree)	25	35
Judaism guides important life decisions	17	28

Israel Travel and Attachment

	NJPS, Non-Orthodox Non-Israelis	NJPS, Non-Orthodox Israelis	JCSNY, Non-Orthodox Non-Israelis	JCSNY, Non-Orthodox Israelis
Ever been to Israel as an adult	24	83	36	83
Level of emotional attachment to Israel (very)	19	72	--	--

Jewish Priorities

Importance of . . . (very)	JCSNY, Non-Orthodox Non-Israelis	JCSNY, Non-Orthodox Israelis
Importance to learn about Jewish history and culture	60	78
Importance to give children a Jewish education	57	79
Importance of Jewish value of <i>tzedakah</i>	53	67
Importance of Jewish art, music, theatre	40	44
Importance that the New York Jewish community support programs for the <i>non</i> -Jewish poor, elderly	58	54
Importance that the New York Jewish community support programs for interfaith children and families	55	51
Importance that the New York Jewish community support Jewish education for children and adults	63	69
Importance that the New York Jewish community support programs that support Israel	78	85

Being Jewish . . . (a lot)	NJPS, Non-Orthodox Non-Israelis	NJPS, Non-Orthodox Israelis
Remembering the Holocaust	73	89
Caring about Israel	40	77
Connecting to family's heritage	57	66
Leading an ethical and moral life	66	64
Giving your children a Jewish education	42	68
Learning about Jewish history and culture	44	67
Celebrating Jewish holidays	43	66
Making the world a better place	57	58
Countering anti-Semitism	59	63
Being part of a Jewish community	29	51
Believing in God	58	51
Supporting Jewish organizations	25	49
Giving future children a Jewish education	38	53
Having a rich spiritual life	38	46
Attending synagogue	16	23
Observing <i>halachah</i>	20	17



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